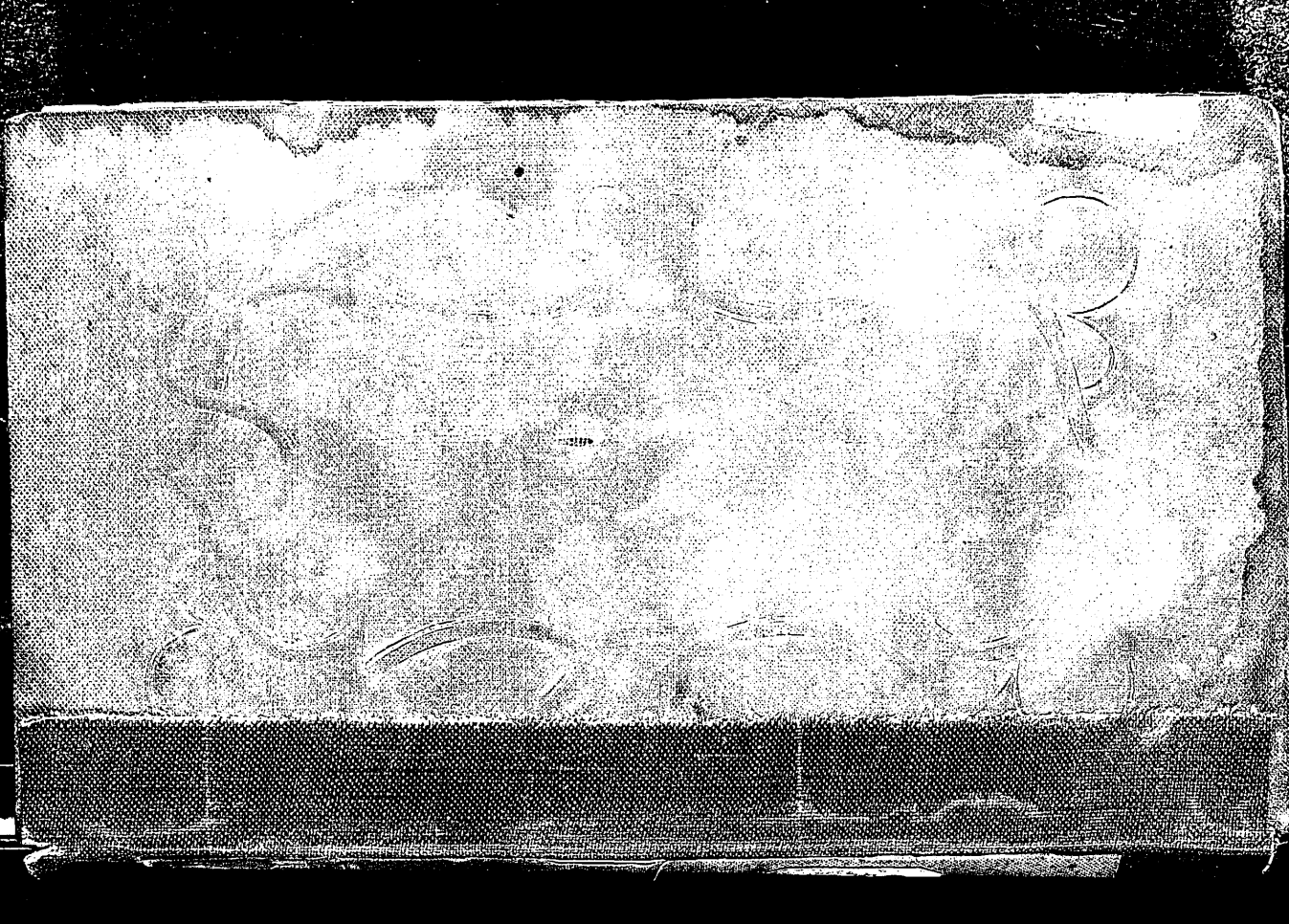

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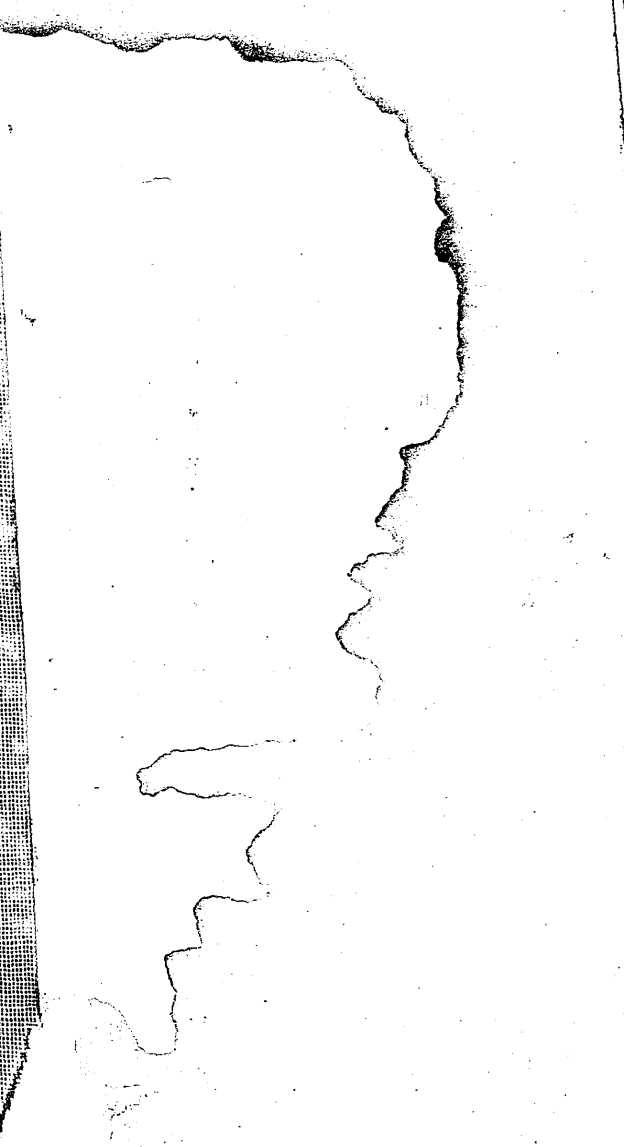

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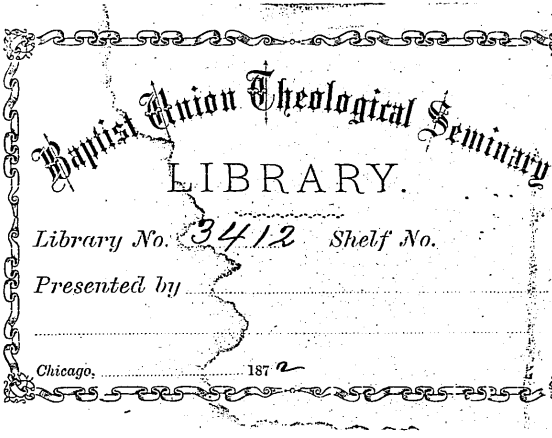

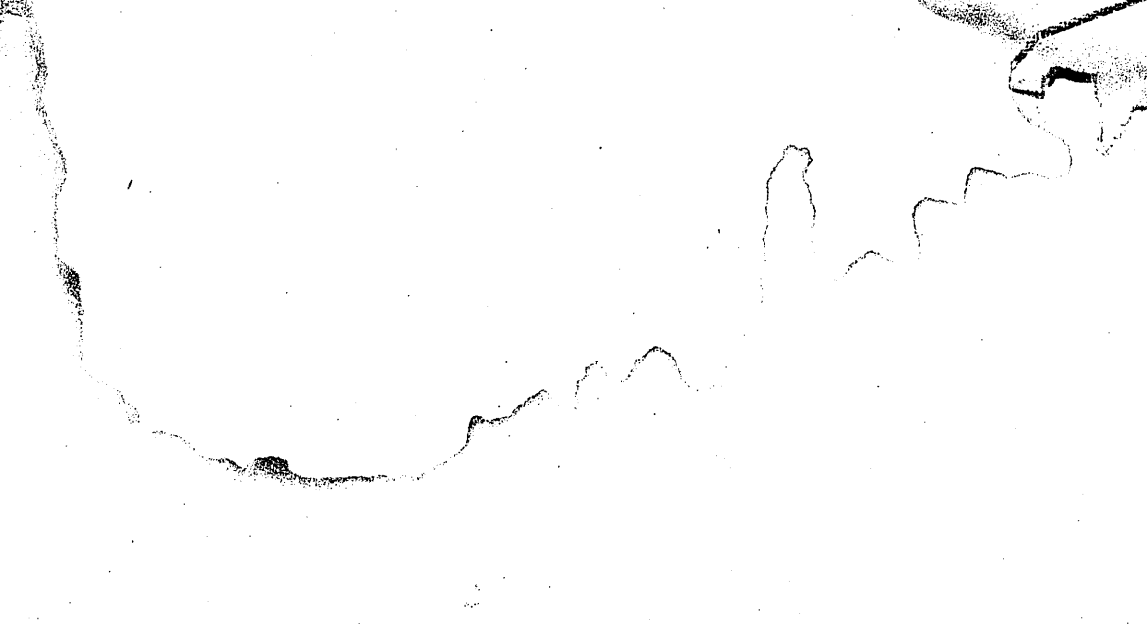

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LONDON:

HAMILTON, ADAMS, & CO. PATERNOSTER-ROW;
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— THAT THEY ALL MAY BE ONE; AS THOU, FATHER, ART IN ME, AND I IN THEE, THAT THEY ALSO MAY BE ONE IN US: THAT THE WORLD MAY BELIEVE THAT THOU HAST SENT ME.—JOHN xvii. 21.

Edinburgh Printing Company.

PREFACE.

On the subject discussed in the following pages, one treatise, from the pen of a celebrated writer, has already appeared; and another, likely to command a large share of public attention, is daily looked for: in such circumstances, it may be asked, why issue a third?

Those who may make such an enquiry are requested to accept of this for a reply.

It was not until after a rather lengthened period of anxious consideration, with an earnest desire to obtain Divine direction, that

the Author came to the fixed resolution of presenting his Essay to the public; and he did so chiefly for the following reasons:—

If there was reason to think that the work was calculated to be in any measure useful, he did not feel that he would be justified in its suppression. Though fully aware of the disadvantageous ground from which he would have to start, the hope that he might succeed in producing some influential impression of the evils of Schism and the advantages of Christian Unity, made him content to make his appearance, immersed in the shadow of greater names.

And it affected him deeply that in Scotland —his native country—a schismatic spirit should prevail, more fearfully, perhaps, than in any other part of Christendom; and yet not a voice be raised against it by any of her sons.

Then, the importance of the subject had long pressed on his mind. True it is, that

every writer is apt to magnify the importance of that particular subject on which he treats; but the Author of the following Essay is convinced that the intrinsic importance of its subject is such that it cannot be too highly estimated, and such as to render altogether needless any laboured exhibition of its claims. If the conversion of the world is suspended on the union of the faithful, what object, connected with the interests of man, can compare in importance with that union?

And the calls for this union become more urgent every hour. Eighteen centuries have elapsed since the advent of Messiah, and yet that world is still perishing, which he died upon the cross to save, and perishing,—for one main reason,—because his followers are obstinately refusing to exhibit to it the crowning evidence of his Divine mission. The various forms of false religion are become old and ready to vanish; but that Divine system, which is destined to supplant them all, is debased

and made contemptible in the eyes of mankind, by its adherents being split into hostile and contending factions. And the religion of Christ, when at length it had begun again to advance over the earth, is arrested in its course, and threatened with a new defeat, from the fearful and increasing feuds of its friends.

On a subject of such vast and immediate importance, the Author of the following Treatise conceived it to be desirable that the public should be put in possession of the results of the independent exercise of different minds, and that the more so, if these should be found—in regard to principles laid down, and measures recommended—greatly coincident. "Two are better than one, and a three-fold cord is not quickly broken."

Having written not to advance the interests of any sect or party, but of "The Holy Catholic Church"—the whole multitude of them

that believe, the Author would inscribe the following Treatise to the faithful of every name, with the earnest hope that whether they listen to his appeals nor not, they will at least attend to those of Him whom they have sworn to obey, and "if there be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies," that they will fulfil His joy, and be "like minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind"—"and live in peace," and then may they expect that the God of love and of peace shall be with them.

And now, having done what he could, the Author would lay his Treatise, such as it is, at the feet of that Master to serve whom he regards as infinitely the highest honour, with the humble but earnest prayer, that if it is in any measure adapted to advance his cause, it may obtain his blessing, and be rendered by his Spirit instrumental in some degree in

accelerating that glorious and happy era, when his prayer for his people shall obtain its full realization—when they all shall be one, and the world shall believe that the Father has sent him, and believing shall be saved.

ALFORD, *May* 10, 1838.

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PART FIRST.

CHRISTIAN UNITY.

SECTION I.

NATURE OF CHRISTIAN UNITY.

"God hath made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on the face of all the earth;"—and had man retained and rightly improved the moral powers with which he was originally furnished, every member of the human family would have felt himself no less inclined in his heart, than required by the Divine Law, to "love his neighbour as himself." Those delightful and elevating impressions of the liberality and love of an infinitely bountiful Creator, which all the objects around him must have made on his heart, could not but have excited love to those finite representatives of Him—reflecting his image—which he would have beheld in his fellows. And these pure and joyous feelings constantly heightened and sustained by emanations of love from the Ever-Blessed Spirit, the whole race over all the earth would have constituted one holy and rejoicing brotherhood; united together by the same tie which connected all with God—the silver cord of love.

But, alas! from the moral eminence on which he was placed, man fell; and by his fall severed himself from God; and sank beneath the horizon of that light of the Divine countenance which had exhilarated his spirit on the heights of paradise. His heart became alienated from his Creator, and this alienation, which is the essence of sin, was followed by anarchy of the affections as its inevitable result. The link once snapped which united man to God, the chain was broke which was to have bound together all the race. Then his heart, instead of glowing with love to God and all his children, became prone to indulge hatred, fierce and indomitable, often not to be quenched but by the blood of its object. Death entered by sin, and it is the direct and uniform tendency of sin in every form to dissolve and destroy. Existing only by the extinction of that principle which unites the heart to God, it tends to extinguish also whatever rightly connects the hearts of men to each other, to dissolve all relationships, to break all ties, to make all men enemies to each other, to fill the earth with misery, to saturate it with blood, eventually to extinguish the race, and sink all into endless perdition.

Such were the dismal prospects of mankind, which rose on the view of God, when man rebelled, a scene which stirred a compassion that no obstacles could withstand. Though difficulties and discouragements, such as no terrene imagery can shadow forth, rose frowning in its course;—justice loudly demanding punishment—hell triumphing in success—death

with his victims already beneath his talons—the universe trembling—archangels aghast, covering their faces with their wings, Omnipotent love was on the wing, and its flight should not be stayed—it should surmount all. The perfections of Jehovah command infinity, and he has resources ready to meet the exigence of the most fearful and perilous occasions. God the Father—adored for ever be his name—in his love and in his pity, announced his desire to save; and God the Word appeared burning with ardour to undertake the redemption of man. Though he looked out and beheld a universe trembling and appalled—no hand to help, no eye to pity—hell triumphant in victory, man at the brink of the bottomless pit, eternal justice ready to dash him in; fear smote not him: He knew that his arm could bring salvation, snatch "the prey from the mighty," and deliver "the captives of the terrible ones." From the height of the eternal throne he beheld man enslaved and degraded, the Divine image, which he once bore resplendent, effaced, the temple of Deity on earth in ruins, and polluted by loathsome and howling monsters; and, worst of all, man a willing slave, embracing the instruments of his degradation, and binding them thicker and more closely on himself. Yet, from his purpose he shrunk not back, his purpose by a manifestation of the intensity of love altogether without a parallel, to draw out from the moral chaos—turbid and tumultuous—which he beheld, a new creation resplendent with the beauties of holiness, and filled with monuments of love, to

restore to earth, as far as might be, the loveliness of paradise, and to call forth sympathies for which paradise, or even its prototype, heaven itself, could furnish no occasion.

Justice required that man should suffer, he therefore became man, descended from the heights of glory—from the throne of the universe—to the helplessness of a child, the privations of a homeless wanderer, the woes of an outcast, and the death of a criminal;—the ignominious death of the cross, with the inconceivable weight of the sins of the world, and the concentration of Divine wrath provoked by them, pressing on his soul. Yet unimaginably awful as was the pressure, he sustained the whole; but with an agony which no heart shall ever conceive, no tongue shall utter. And it was for us he suffered —it was in our stead. Surely this shall kindle love to him in our hearts, if we are not more insensible than the beasts of the field. Though he received from the hands of men the consummation of insult and cruelty, it was for man that he submitted to all: yea, his heart melted with the tenderest compassion even for those who expended their malignity upon him. "Father, forgive them," such was the aspiration of his heart on their behalf—"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."—"Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this." Circuit of the intelligent creation! behold a manifestation, indeed, of "the length and breadth, and height and depth, of the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge"!

Christ submitted to death, but he could not be

retained under its dominion. He by his resurrection proved himself the Lord of life and death, while he showed most manifestly that he had completed his work and vanquished his foes. And now the ends of his advent attained—all the requirements of the law fulfilled—sin expiated—death unstinged—hell subdued—the infinite love of God to man illustriously displayed—a perfect pattern of holy obedience exhibited;—all things ready for the operations of the Spirit, he ascended to heaven, carrying our nature with him, as the precursor of all the redeemed, whom he shall yet "ransom from the power of the grave." What shouts of acclamation may we conceive to have burst from the heavenly hosts—from cherubim and seraphim, from thrones, dominions, principalities and powers, when the Son of Man entered the courts of the temple above, as conqueror over the powers of evil, his resplendent body at once the evidence of his triumph, and the trophy of his victory.—"Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? the Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord, mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? the Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory."

But though in his human nature he withdrew from the earth, he did not leave the work to be carried out into effect by the unassisted power of man; for he well knew that to be weakness itself.

He assured his disciples that he would himself be always with them, and sent the Holy Spirit—the third glorious Subsistence of the Divine Essence—to be the Monitor, Purifier, and Comforter of all his chosen. This Divine Agent signalized his extraordinary advent by a "sound as of a rushing mighty wind," and produced on each of his selected agents the appearance of a cloven tongue of fire—the symbol of the power he was putting forth in making the darkness of all unknown vehicles of thought luminous as flame to those on whom his energy descended—giving them fluent utterance in languages which they had never learned. Such were the inaugural displays of his power in the church. But in his usual operations his presence is not indicated by any supernatural signs. Like the gentle showers of evening which water the earth, and cause its products to spring up and bring forth fruit,—like the dew from "the womb of the morning," which refreshes "the tender herb," he operates unperceived: those bounties of Providence that are at once most common and most useful symbolize his agency: and he alone it is who works effectually in all who believe. Christians, whatever their situation in this world, are identified in the high privilege of their bodies being "temples of the Holy Spirit;" they all have this ennobling and fraternizing distinction,—"have all been made to drink into one spirit." He, if the door be opened to admit him, is not less ready to enter the heart of the houseless wanderer, and to make him shout and sing with unutterable joy, than

he is to come into the soul of the throned monarch of many nations.

"God so loved the world"—loved it with such a wonderful love—"that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." No narrow limits confined his love. His heart was opened to the race, ready to receive all, if they might but be persuaded to come to him and have life. And Christ, too, in his sympathies embraced the world. He came to seek and to save the lost, and from the invitations of his mercy none were excluded—"Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely." And though he withdrew in bodily presence from the earth, he withdrew not his love; its interests continued to press on his heart. Still burning with ardour to save, his parting command to his disciples was, that they should go into all the world, and publish everywhere the achievements of his love, that it might draw forth, and knit together in one, his chosen in every region;—that under the waterings of his grace there might rise, amid the howling moral deserts of earth, oases of delightful verdure, and rich with heavenly fruit—gardens of the Lord that should ever increase and extend, until, meeting and blending on every hand, earth should present one unbroken scene of beauty on every continent and isle. Such was the condition to which he desired to bring our world—to nothing less than the full measure of loveliness and glory which ancient seers

had foretold. And the power by which he was to effect this was infinite love—that love which he had come from heaven to display. And this love was to operate through the medium of man. Every heart which was a recipient of it, he meant to become a dispenser of it too; an emanative centre, diffusing its attractive influence on all sides round. And this heavenly principle was to be not only the attracting power by which men were to be drawn upward to God, and in towards each other, but also the bond whereby they were to be held together. Filled with this love they would become all "of one heart and one soul." The essence of sin being displaced by the essence of holiness—the lost Divine principle restored—they were to be reconstituted one holy and rejoicing brotherhood, all children of God, with the Lord Jesus Christ himself as their head and elder brother—the fountain of their life, their light, and their love; who gave the crowning proof of the unquenchable ardour of his love for them, by shedding his blood, not less that he might cement their union, than that he might wash away their sins.

Christian union, then, is a union of sanctified natures—of such as show that they are under the influence of the love of Christ—that they are united to him—by obeying his commandments, and taking part with his people. It is a union which can subsist only in Christ. Christians can be "all one" only in him. Separation from him is separation also from the community of the faithful. "If

a man abide not in me," says our Lord, "he is cast forth as a branch and withered." It is a union which he only is competent to maintain; the golden chain of love which binds believing heart to heart would soon lose its hold and fall to the earth, if not held secure by "the Lamb in the midst of the throne;" or, to adopt the figure of the inspired writer, he "is the head, by whom the whole body being aptly joined together, and compacted through the service of every joint, he maketh increase of the body in measure, according to the inworking of each particular part, to the building of himself by love."* Christ, "the head of his body the church," is the director of its movements, and the source of its power; yet the members are not inert, "every joint" yieldeth service, and love is the all-pervading principle, the moving spring of the whole. That love which is the bond of this union ought, in as far as the capacity of the human soul will permit, to be strong as the love of Christ. "This is my commandment, that ye love one another, *as I have loved you.*"—"Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." And to crown the whole, it was the prayer of Christ that the union of his people might be like that ineffable union which subsists between him and his Father: that it might be close as the connection of the glorious subsistences in the Divine essence, and

* Ephes. iv. 15, 16. Macknight's Translation.

might be so by subsisting in them. "I pray .... for all that shall believe on me, ... that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us." The union of Christians receives its most solemn public ratification and seal, when they join in commemorating the dying love of their Lord, by partaking of the symbols of his body which was broken for them, and his blood which was shed for the remission of their sins.

In the church of Christ—the union of the faithful—no worldly distinctions are recognised. Persons, whatever their rank in civil society, however great their earthly possessions, or however much distinguished by genius and mental acquirements, have no peculiar privileges there. Nothing but union to Christ can entitle any to privileges in his church, and that entitles all alike. Among those who "have been baptized into Christ," and "have put on Christ, there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, for" they "are all one in Christ Jesus." It is only by being brought into union with Christ and into "the church which he hath purchased with his blood," that man is restored to his proper relationship to God, and his original place in creation. Accordingly, we find that the church of Christ is the only community on earth which fully recognises and vindicates the native dignity of the human spirit, as a dignity independent of all exterior distinctions. There the Lord "raiseth the poor

out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill, and setteth him with princes;" and this is but a step towards that amazing elevation to which he, with every other child of God, is destined to be raised; for from the place which he now occupies he will soon call him up to the height of his glory, and place him with himself upon his throne.

SECTION II.

BASIS OF CHRISTIAN UNITY.

When the Jews received assurance from Jehovah, that "a king should reign" over them "in righteousness," and that those who threatened to enslave them should be signally and completely overthrown; Isaiah represents a chorus of them as breaking out into a rejoicing and triumphant song, and thus characterizing the anticipated period of security and happiness, which they should enjoy under their just and righteous governor, "Wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times."* But though this prediction might have received a partial and limited fulfilment during the reign of Hezekiah, it could obtain its complete realization only during the reign of a more glorious and more powerful King; to which it no doubt, as the dictate of the inspiring Spirit, had ultimate and principal reference, and of whom the Jewish king was a type. Accordingly,

* Isaiah xxxiii. 6. See Lowth.

and in harmony with this, we find another prophet recording it as the immediate declaration of Jehovah himself, that a distinctive characteristic of those with whom he was to make a new covenant in coming days, should be, that "they should not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; because they should all know him, from the least of them even unto the greatest of them." None but those who knew him were to be, under the new economy, acknowledged by him as his people. In beautiful accordance with these predictions of the prophets, we find the following declarations of the Apostle John, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the word of life. . . . . That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. . . . God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another." Thus the fellowship of Christians with each other as well as with God is to be enjoyed only by walking in "light;" and it is the result of their knowing God—of their knowing Him as he has manifested himself in Christ. This knowledge it is which renders easy to Christians their recognition of each other; the better that they are acquainted with him, the more readily

will they recognise the lineaments of his image wheresoever they appear. "He that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him." But this love implies previous knowledge; men cannot love an object unless they have seen it, or know something of it; and they cannot love each other as brethren in Christ, unless they know each other to be so—unless their character be so far in harmony with his, as affords reason to believe that they have entered into this endearing relation with him. Therefore mutual knowledge—knowledge of each other as the children of God, and brethren of Christ, must be the basis of the union of Christians. Knowledge of Christ constitutes the foundation of union with him; and the more correct and enlarged the conceptions of his people are respecting his person, his character, his love, his official functions, and his expiatory sufferings, the more permanent and influential will be the order of feeling they will produce, (for correct and comprehensive knowledge is the only sure basis of appropriate and perennial feeling,) and by consequence, the closer and surer will their union with him be. It is only "in the knowledge of the Son of God," as it is only "in the unity of the faith," that we can "come unto a perfect man; unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Even so it is on mutual knowledge that the union of Christians is based. Acquainted with the character of each other—perceiving in each other the lineaments of the Divine image—they cannot but love each other as being all objects of the same Divine

love; subjects of its most beneficent operations, and humble expectants of its eternal enjoyments. And thus become one in spirit, in privileges, in enjoyments, and in anticipations, they co-operate in diffusing the savour of their Redeemer's name.

In order to a broad and firm basis being obtained for an enduring Christian union, it would be highly desirable that all Christians, but especially all who occupy official and influential stations in the church, should possess at least such a measure of knowledge as may be comprehended under the following heads.

1. Such an acquaintance with the evidences of Christianity as shall produce in the mind a settled conviction of its Divine origin:—Such a knowledge of the proofs of the authenticity, genuineness, and inspiration of the Scriptures, as shall lead the mind to receive them, and that not merely as authentic historical documents, and the veritable writings of those whose names their various books bear; but also and especially as the word of the living God. The advantages of this kind of knowledge must be manifest. Supported by such bulwarks of evidence, the faith of the Christian will stand unshaken amid the assaults of infidelity; and he will be "always ready to give an answer to every one who asketh a reason of the hope that is in him," and strong in the faith, he will become a "pillar in the temple of God." On the other hand, when ignorant of the evidences of Christianity, the mind is apt to be unsettled by the flippant cavillings of scepticism; and though it

should not have to encounter these, it will still suffer the privation of that high and invigorating satisfaction, which springs from beholding the convergence of many separate lines of evidence, on that which it regards as the revelation from heaven, and on which its hopes for eternity are built.

2. An enlightened acquaintance with the doctrines, precepts, and spirit of the Scriptures, derived directly from the Scriptures themselves. In order to arrive at an enlarged acquaintance with the Word of God, Christians may avail themselves, according to their opportunities, of all the aids which learning and research have supplied; but they are not to receive any religious doctrine, nor adopt any opinion, on human authority—because it is held by any man or class of men—for this were to violate the injunction of Christ, that his disciples should "call no man master on earth." Those who would aspire to the honourable and influential eminence of being enlightened Christians, unbiassed by sectarian prejudices and partialities,—those who would be disciples and adherents of Christ alone, must endeavour, as far as possible, to study the Scriptures, as if such distinctions, as those, for instance, between Calvinists and Arminians, Churchmen and Dissenters, Baptists and Pædo-baptists, had never been known in the church.

3. From the multiplied and perplexing divisions of Christians in modern times has resulted the necessity of another kind of knowledge among Christians, if we would obtain a broad and firm basis for

Christian unity; namely, a knowledge of the distinguishing doctrinal views, and modes of worship, government, and discipline of the various denominations of professing Christians. In order that this knowledge may be as correct as possible, as well as most conducive to the end for which it is required, enquirers must address themselves to its acquisition in the most impartial manner. They must listen to the statements and exposition given by each denomination of its peculiar views and observances, as well as to the statements and arguments of opponents. A person who has not impartially examined the doctrines and forms of the various religious bodies, is wanting in the knowledge requisite to enable him to feel and act as a disciple of Jesus Christ towards his Christian brethren of every communion. His ignorance in reference to these things makes him peculiarly liable to entertain partial views, and to fall into serious misconceptions concerning the principles and conduct of many of the faithful servants of Christ; and manifestly disqualifies him for sustaining any public or influential function in the church, either with honour to himself, or with advantage to the Christian community.

If the preceding observations, regarding the important bearing which extended and comprehensive knowledge and impartial examination have on the unity of the church, be well founded, the matter deserves the serious attention of all the members of every communion; and especially ought Christian parents, instructors of youth, ministers of the gospel,

and religious writers, to be deeply impressed with a sense of the weighty responsibility which rests on them, inasmuch as they exert a mighty influence for good or for evil on the future character of the Christian community. Let all such think how much, under God, it depends upon them whether the Christian church shall become what she was intended to be, "the light of the world," and "the joy of the whole earth;" or whether she shall continue, on account of her divisions and strifes, "a proverb and a by-word among all the nations." Christian parents, teachers of youth, and ministers of the gospel, we would beseech you, as you regard the most important interests of those committed to your care, as you value the peace, prosperity, and extension of the church, as you commiserate the millions of immortal spirits hastening on to eternity unsaved, as you regard the most solemn and unqualified commands of your Lord, and would desire to meet his approval at last, be careful to imbue the minds of all under your superintendence with the spirit of enlightened love. Encourage them to examine and judge for themselves in a spirit of humility and reliance on Divine guidance,—to "prove all things,"—to bring all things to the infallible test of Scripture, knowing that it is only by doing so they can "hold fast that which is good." Direct them in their enquiries, instructing them on what points you conceive persons may safely hold different opinions, if they adopt these on candid examination, and in the exercise of prayer for Divine enlightening and guidance. Teach

them to honour the Divine image on whomsoever it appears. Encourage them, so far as they have opportunity, to cultivate acquaintance with good men of every communion. Let the rising generation be thus instructed and guided, and we may hope soon to see the church rising "from the dust" of her defilement and degradation, putting on her "beautiful garments," and coming "forth clear as the sun, fair as the moon, and terrible as an army with banners," to enlighten and subdue the world.

SECTION III.

TERMS OF CHRISTIAN UNITY.

God has declared that the medium of our acceptance, as sinners, with him, is faith alone. "He that believeth shall be saved."—"Justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." And surely that which is the medium of acceptance with God may well warrant reception by man. Accordingly, we find that a hearty profession of faith in Christ, or confession of his name, was the only apostolic term of communion. We are informed by the sacred historian of the Acts of the Apostles, that, when Peter had ended his discourse on the memorable day of Pentecost, his hearers were "pierced in their hearts, and said unto" him "and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Peter said unto them, Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins. . . . . Then they that gladly received his word were baptized; and the same day there were added to them about three

thousand souls." The "word" which they "gladly received" was the gospel of Christ, an epitome of which his inspired servant had just delivered to them. "And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." Thus without any reference to what they previously were, on receiving the gospel into their hearts by faith, they were admitted by baptism into the full fellowship of the church. And they proved themselves worthy of its privileges; for we are farther informed, that "all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people." And the evangelist subjoins the delightful statement, that "the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." Such is the lovely and glorious picture which the pencil of inspiration has drawn of the church at Jerusalem.—A multitude of believers having "one heart and one soul," rejoicingly united in the service of God, commanding the respect of the people around them, and daily drawing in converts from the world, "believers" being "added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women."

The Jews regarded the Gentiles with the utmost aversion, contemned them as for ever shut out from all participation in the Divine favour, regarding

themselves as its exclusive objects. The reluctance of Peter to communicate the gospel to them was not overcome without a special vision, and an authoritative command from heaven. And doubtless, the aversion of his brethren to their admission to all the privileges of the Christian community would be equally difficult to overcome, or still more so; for we find it recorded that when he came from Cesarea to Jerusalem, "they that were of the circumcision contended with him, saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them." Wherefore God, that he might put his acceptance of the Gentiles beyond the reach of questioning, by the special energy of his Holy Spirit invested those who received the gospel from Peter, in the house of Cornelius, with the same miraculous power as the apostles themselves had been endowed with on the day of Pentecost. The evidence in this case was not merely satisfactory, but irresistible; even inveterate prejudice was obliged to acquiesce in silence. But where no such miraculous manifestations were required, the Gentiles were received into the fellowship of the saints on the same terms as the Jews. Under the ministrations of the Apostle Paul at Corinth, we are informed that "many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized." When the Philippian jailor, in consternation and alarm, enquired of Paul and Silas, what he should do to be saved, the answer he received was, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." And the inspired historian informs us that

"they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes, and was baptized, he and all his straightway. . . . And rejoiced, believing in God with all his house." When the Ethiopian eunuch thus addressed Philip, "See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" the answer he received from the apostle was, "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest." The faith which the apostles required in order to admission into the church, was a very different thing indeed from that listless assent, which is all that thousands bearing the Christian name now give to the gospel,—it occupied and moved the whole heart.

The primitive churches were not permitted to enforce uniformity either of views or practice in regard to external rites. Neither the observance nor the non-observance of such rites was allowed to be made a term of communion in them.* The Spirit of inspiration absolutely and solemnly forbad any infringement of Christian unity, on account of differences of opinion regarding these rites; and in some cases we are certain that a diversity of opinion and practice subsisted among the members of the same church respecting them; as in the churches of Corinth and Rome;—a diversity, we should think, almost as great as that subsisting between any of the reformed churches, yet they were commanded to

* See Acts xv. 5–29 inclusive, and Rom. xiv.

receive one another even as Christ had received them, and not only to maintain "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," but also the union of visible Christian fellowship. Jewish converts were permitted to practise circumcision, and to observe other parts of the Mosaic Law, so long as they did not attempt to enforce the observance of such things on their Gentile brethren; but the moment they did so, apostolic authority interposed, "subjection" was not yielded, "no not for an hour." In Paul's Epistle to the churches of Galatia, we have an account of a case in which such an infringement of Christian liberty was attempted, by "false brethren unawares brought in." — "However," says the apostle, "not even Titus, who was with me, though a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised." Those who attempted to enforce on their brethren, converted from among the Gentiles, the observance of the Mosaic ritual, received from the Spirit of God by the mouth of Peter this severe rebuke, "Why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?"

So long as circumcision and other Jewish rites were merely permitted, and while those who observed them were regarded as "weak in the faith," as but imperfectly acquainted with the true genius of Christianity, it was made manifest to all, that "in Christ Jesus circumcision availeth nothing;" confidence in external rites was discouraged—no ground was afforded it whereon to rest. But once let the

observance of these rites have been enforced upon all, and they could have appeared unimportant no longer. Confidence would in many cases have been transferred from the atonement of Christ to them, the church would have been driven back on the "beggarly elements;" and the distinctive spirituality of Christianity destroyed. Accordingly, we find that the observance of Jewish rites was conceded to the weakness and predilections of Jewish converts, only so long as they did not esteem or inculcate them as possessed of any importance or efficacy under the Christian dispensation. Whenever any of them began so to regard or inculcate them, their observance was permitted to such no longer; it was declared in their case to be utterly incompatible with the essence of Christian character. The language of inspired authority to such was, "I say unto you, If you be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man who is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of none effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law: ye are fallen from grace ..... For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but faith that worketh by love." Those who evinced a disposition to attach importance to the observance of superseded ceremonies, necessarily brought into suspicion the genuineness of their faith. "After that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again

to be in bondage? Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain. . . . . I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice; for I stand in doubt of you." In accordance with this, we find that separation of Jewish from Gentile brethren, on account of differences subsisting between them regarding ceremonial observances, was emphatically condemned by the same apostle, not only as inimical to Christian unity, but also as tending to the subversion of the gospel, by reinvesting with importance such observances: "When Peter was come to Antioch," says he, "I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles; but when they were come, he withdrew, and separated himself, fearing them who were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly, according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of the Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews? We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed on Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of

the law shall no flesh be justified. . . . If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain."

Christians are to receive into their fellowship those who manifest faith, however weak; and in receiving the weak they are to exercise the utmost tenderness in regard to their infirmities. "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations," or, as Dr Macknight renders it, "not to the strifes of disputations." The risk of engendering strife is not to be incurred by entering into disputation with such. He is to be received simply as one whom the church has reason to believe Christ has received, without at all quarrelling with him on account of the infirmities that may cleave to him. Those by whom he is received may endeavour to instruct him in the spirit of brotherly kindness, yea, it is their duty to do so, but they must not give way to angry contentions with him, as that would manifestly tend to break Christian unity, and by wounding his weak conscience, and placing a stumbling-block in his way, might endanger the safety of his soul. There is an inestimable and fearful importance in that ill understood and sadly disregarded injunction of the Spirit, "For meat, destroy not the work of God." Heinous, indeed, against the brethren, and against Christ, is the sin of offending one of his "little ones."—"Better," he declares, were it for him who does so, "that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea."

The duty of mutual toleration among brethren in

reference to differences of opinion and practice regarding rites and ceremonies, is most admirably stated and enforced by the Apostle Paul in the fourteenth chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, as well as the exercise of tenderness, forbearance, and self-denial towards the weak, in regard to their conscientious scruples. "One believeth that he may eat all things; another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him who eateth not judge him who eateth; for God hath received him. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? . . . . One man esteemeth one day above another; another esteemeth every day alike. *Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.* He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that doth not regard the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks. For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord's." Thus Christians regarding themselves as the Lord's possession, as devoted to him, whether in life or in death, each is to endeavour to be fully persuaded in his own mind, and to pursue the course which he believes to be right, in reference to all such matters, and to allow all his brethren to do the same.

Uniformity of church government and order cannot be necessary to Christian unity, any more than uniformity in respect to ritual observances, seeing we have conclusive evidence that diversity of views and practice in the one case, as well as in the other, is perfectly compatible with union to Christ. Exact uniformity of church order and government is nowhere enjoined in the New Testament, and in fact could not have been enjoined, seeing Christian societies in these respects were soon to undergo considerable changes by the extinction of the apostolic office, and the cessation of miraculous powers. The Divine Spirit having distinctly stated the terms and conditions of Christian communion, and clearly shown their bearing and application in relation to the most difficult cases, appears to have deemed it sufficient to lay down the great principles by which Christian societies should be regulated and governed, leaving the modes and agency, in and by which these principles are to be applied, in a considerable measure, to be selected and fixed by Christian wisdom and prudence, guided always by the great principles in question: all things being done to edification: all things done decently and in order: rulers conducting themselves not as "lords over God's heritage, but as ensamples to the flock;" and private Christians obeying them that have the rule over them in all things where their commands do not interfere with the authority of God.

The sum of the whole matter, then, in reference to church order and ritual observances, appears to

be this:—Forms or usages indifferent in their nature, are good or profitable only to those who conscientiously observe them; they are indifferent so long as their observance is optional, (it being obvious, while this is the case, that they possess no intrinsic value, and rest on no authority,) but when their observance is attempted to be enforced, they are to be regarded as indifferent no longer, for then is an importance or efficacy attributed to them dangerous to the purity and simplicity of the gospel; and no man can be chargeable with schism in any separation he may be compelled to make in refusing submission to such enforcement, seeing the apostle would not give place by subjection to an attempt to enforce such observances—"no, not for an hour."

Faith, then, is the primary distinctive characteristic of the people of God;—collectively they are designated "the household of faith;" it is the sole medium of a sinner's acceptance with God; and its existence, credibly evinced, should be the only condition of admission into the fellowship of the saints. But a most important question now presents itself: As faith has its seat in the heart, which is hidden from the eye of man, how are we to ascertain whether it has a place there or not?—What are we to regard as credible evidence of its existence?—What are we to receive as a credible profession of it? Persons, we have seen, were admitted into the primitive churches simply on receiving the word of God into their hearts, or on confessing the name of Christ, that is, on exercising and professing faith in him; and this

procedure was in beautiful harmony with that declaration of the Spirit—"With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation;" and with that of Christ—"Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father who is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father who is in heaven." But there is a wide disparity between the state of matters connected with Christian profession as subsisting in apostolic times, and that which subsists now. Then, none were reckoned Christians but such as had by their own voluntary choice become so, and had before men solemnly professed themselves to be so. *Now*, by a long prevalent and most fatal conventional deception, all are considered Christians who do not avow unbelief. Thousands there are in our times and country who think, because they have been baptized in infancy, and perhaps confirmed on coming to the years of discretion, because they go to church on Sunday, and partake of the "holy communion," and are no worse than their neighbours, that they shall go to heaven when they die, and be happy. In the apostolic times the very name of Christian was despised and hated by the great majority of all classes of the community in every place where it was known. Confession of the name of Christ—adherence to his cause and people—always implied a voluntary submission to hatred and contempt—even to the hatred and contempt of former associates and friends; and generally exposed

to scourging, bonds, imprisonment, and death. What shall we consider as equivalent now to a confession of faith in Christ under conditions and prospects such as these?—or, do the circumstances in which we are placed admit of any thing at all equivalent? On first glancing at the matter, we might be apt to conclude that they do not; that our situation has no points of coincidence with that of Christians in primitive times; but on more careful consideration we will perceive that it is otherwise. True it is, that a serious profession of religion does not expose us to any physical suffering, nor bring our liberties and lives into peril, (and we ought highly to value our privileges, and with devout thankfulness to improve and enjoy them,) still it exposes to what is to most men equally hard to be borne—ridicule and contempt; for, alas! the majority of our countrymen still thus regard and treat vital godliness. A determination to follow Christ whithersoever he goes, still draws on him who evinces it, the derision and disdain, of the world of business, of fashion, and frivolity;—is designated fanaticism, pronounced a proof of mental imbecility, or a cloak put on to cover moral obliquity. In primitive times a profession of faith in Christ implied renunciation of whatever form of idolatry or false religion was before adhered to. And though among us there are no gods set up of wood and stone, the world has still its objects of worship—objects to which it yields a real adoration. Among us, then, a profession of faith in Christ cannot be regarded as

at all equivalent to such a profession in primitive times, unless it embody a resolution to renounce the world, in its pleasures, its friendship, and the objects of its worship; and a readiness to submit to its frowns and its contempt, evinced by a desire to be connected with those who are already the objects of these. Less than this cannot be regarded as a profession of faith, or an avowal of discipleship; for believing on Christ implies receiving him as our Saviour, and yielding ourselves up to his service. But in thus yielding ourselves we must renounce the world, for "no man can serve two masters;" and Christ has solemnly declared, that "whosoever doth not renounce all that he hath cannot be his disciple," and "whosoever doth not take up his cross and follow him cannot be his disciple."

If renunciation of the world, and separation from it, be indispensable adjuncts of true faith, and therefore essential to union with Christ, they must be equally indispensable to proper union with his people. If the friendship of the world "be enmity with God," what else can it be with those who love him? How can the children of God recognise or love one as a brother, who prefers the enemies of their heavenly Father to his friends?—or who even bestows on them an equal regard? How can they think that the "secret of the Lord" is with one whose soul comes "into the secret" of those who hate him? What is true in this respect regarding Christians as individuals, will also hold good concerning them in the capacity of churches. How

can a church receive or retain the fraternal regard of other churches of the saints, which prefers the friendship of the world to their friendship?—union with the world to union with them? Surely any church must be doing sadly the reverse of "endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," which receives into her bosom the enemies of God, while she rejects and frowns away from her his friends. Friendship, or fraternization of Christians with the world, then, either as individuals or societies, is not compatible with union among themselves, any more than it is compatible with union to Christ, or true faith in him.

SECTION IV.

CONDITIONS ON WHICH THE MAINTENANCE OF CHRISTIAN UNITY DEPENDS.

As a real union of Christians can subsist no otherwise but in Christ, it being in him only that they can be "all one," whatever is a condition of their continuing in union with him, must be not less a condition of their maintaining a proper union among themselves. It is only by keeping his commandments that any one is to continue in the enjoyment of union with Christ.—"If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love."—"Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you."—"I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman; every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away." And the union of Christians, whether as individuals with each other in the capacity of churches, or as different churches with one another, is to be maintained in the same manner as union with Christ; namely, by the keeping of his commandments; for it is only by the keeping of them that men can furnish evidence of being his people, and

it is only by continuing to recognise each other as such that they can continue to love as brethren, and it is only by loving as brethren that they can maintain a real Christian unity. But so long as the members of such a union continue to furnish evidence of connection with Christ by a conscientious obedience to his commandments, as far as they know these, and by an anxious desire to know them fully; each endeavouring to be fully persuaded in his own mind, and wishing all his brethren to be so in theirs; each acting agreeably to his convictions, and freely allowing all his brethren to do the same, no change of views or practice in regard to rites or forms would affect the stability of such a fraternity; it not being on any special views of these that it is based, but on a mutually recognised identity as children of God. The members of such a Christian community may form themselves into distinct churches, each marked by that peculiar phase of church government and order which is most consonant to the views of those composing it. They may, we say, do this wherever expediency warrants,—wherever they dwell contiguously in sufficient numbers to support separately the ordinances of Christian worship; and yet continue, not the less on that account, to regard and treat each other as brethren individually, and in the capacity of churches, as churches of Christ. From a community of this kind, properly regulated, nothing could occasion separation but apostacy from the faith, or indulgence in known sin; as nothing but what separates a person from Christ can warrant

entire excision from the church. But believers are subject to many infirmities—have much evil and corruption remaining in their hearts—and "in many things offend all." Every sin separates in some degree between them and their God, intercepting the vivifying light of his countenance; and the ultimate tendency of all sin is to dissolve their union with Christ, though in the riches of his mercy it is not permitted to do so. Nor is it less the tendency of all sin to break up the fraternal connection of Christians with each other. And as they are chargeable with many improprieties and errors in conduct calculated to give offence to each other, both in their daily intercourse in the world, and in the exercise of their various functions in the church: and, moreover, as the love and forbearing patience of Christians towards each other, are unspeakably inferior to the love and forbearance of Christ towards them, many things may separate them from one another, which will not separate them from him. The maintenance of Christian unity will, therefore, require great tenderness, forbearance, humility, and circumspection, and, above all, the fervent love of pure hearts.

The importance of this part of our subject will warrant our adverting, with some particularity, to the most prominent of those things which have a direct bearing on the maintenance of Christian unity.

That which, by eminence, deserves the first place among these, is the fulfilment of the law of bro-

therly love. Love of the brethren is not so much a distinct branch of the duty of Christians towards each other, as the animating principle and moving spring of all. And if love be the fulfilling of the Divine Law in its other branches, it is so pre-eminently in this—"This is my commandment," says Christ to his disciples, "that ye love one another." Brotherly love is a distinctive characteristic of the new economy, deriving its specific character—its peculiar tenderness and force—from the manifested love of Christ. "A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another." This evangelical law will not say it is enough until its subjects love one another, as Christ has loved them—with a sympathizing tenderness, with an enduring patience, with a self-denying ardour, with an inextinguishable fervour, like his—with a love stronger than death. The summit of Christian perfection is lofty as the throne of God; a height which the most elevated saint must despair of ever reaching in any other way than through our Lord Jesus Christ. Our sufficiency is in him. He alone can raise to such an elevation.

Christian unity, then, is to be maintained by cherishing and manifesting that brotherly love which is its bond. But the only element in which this love lives and operates is the kindred element of love to Christ: and the vital force of the one is always proportioned to the active energy of the other. Let Christians then cherish the love of brethren to each other, by cherishing love to their elder Brother. Let

them think of the magnitude of their obligations to Him. Let them contrast the fathomless depths of misery to which they were sinking, with the heights of glory to which they shall be raised—" Blackness of darkness," and unutterable torments; with cloudless light, and " fulness of joy." Let them reflect on the amazing means by which their redemption has been secured. Let them attempt to estimate the force of that love which moved God to give his only begotten Son, to lay the sins of the world upon him, and to smite him with the stroke which they had provoked—a stroke which would have dashed the entire race into perdition. Let them think of that Son, the equal of the Father, " the Mighty God," " the King Eternal,"—emptying himself of his glory—appearing in humanity's meanest garb. Emptying himself that they might be filled, abasing himself that they might be elevated, dying that they might live, suffering that they might reign; taking the lowest place on earth, that there might be none beneath him whom he could not reach and raise. Let them contemplate Christ lifted up on the cross, fixed there by love to them, pierced by their sins; and with such a spectacle before them, let them listen to the voice with which the illustrious Sufferer addresses them—" Are ye moved by my agonies? then let them move you to keep my commandments; for he that keepeth my commandments, he it is that loveth me: and this is my commandment, that ye love one another, AS I HAVE LOVED YOU." Beholding him fixed upon the cross—

fixed between two criminals, as the greatest of the three, insulted by spectators, derided by those that suffered with him, deserted by his own disciples, assailed by all the fury of the powers of darkness, forsaken by his Father, suffering the heaviest inflictions of his wrath; hearing him, in the bitterness of an unwonted and awful privation, exclaim, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" and reflecting that all this was endured for them, let them then estimate the force of that appeal, "LOVE ONE ANOTHER, AS I HAVE LOVED YOU." Then let them think how they have treated such a manifestation of love:—how long they regarded it with unthinking indifference, or worse, perhaps, despised it; how often they have resisted the efforts of the Blessed Spirit to impress it on their hearts, and notwithstanding how he still continued his striving with them, nor ceased till he had brought them to Christ: and coming to him, God has forgiven them all.—Still contemplating the cross, let them again listen to the voice of him who hangs upon it—"If thy brother trespass against thee, forgive him, even as God for my sake hath forgiven you." And surely every one who rightly contemplates the cross, and has imbibed the spirit of him who suffered there, must, when any of his brethren may have injured him, and he may be inclined to cherish resentment, or to retaliate, feel such reflections as these rising in his heart—"How much has God forgiven me, and shall I not forgive my brother this, which is comparatively so little—so insignificant? Shall I not forgive him when

my Lord and Saviour has commanded me to do so, when I think what a Saviour he is, and how much he has done and endured that I might be forgiven? Shall I not forgive him, when I hold the enjoyment of such a love as the love of God, and receive the forgiveness of my own sins on this express condition?"

Surely all who contemplate aright such a manifestation of infinite love as appears in the cross of Christ, and regard themselves as the objects of it, must "be changed into the same image," and "put on, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any—even as Christ hath forgiven them." And over all these they will "put on love, which is the bond of perfection." Christ hath dealt mercifully and tenderly with them, and shall they deal harshly with each other? Surely he has infinitely greater reason to treat the least offending of them with severity than any of them can have so to treat another; yet he bears with them still, corrects them only in love—chastens them but for their profit, "that they may not be condemned with the world." Christians, think with what tenderness and long-suffering forbearance you have been treated by your Lord: He has "borne your griefs and carried your sorrows," he has forgiven all your iniquities, he has shielded you from evil, he has succoured you in temptation; like a good shepherd, he has made you

lie down in "green pastures," and led you out "beside the still waters;" and shall you, by angry contentions and strifes, disturb the peacefulness, and mar the enjoyments, of such a delightful scene?

Rightly contemplating the cross—influenced by that love of which it crowns the manifestations, Christians will be careful to "put away all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and all evil speaking, with all malice;" for these, most repugnant to the spirit of Christ, the head of the church, tend directly to destroy the unity of the members of his body. The law of love permits not indulgence in these things. Christians are brethren, they are friends, and no man can take delight in vilifying the friend whom he loves, he cannot blazon his faults; if compelled to speak of them, he will always do it with reluctance and pain. No one can indulge malice towards the object of his love, the feelings are so intensely repugnant, that the one cannot find place in the mind but by the extinction of the other. How then can Christians indulge in evil speaking or in hatred towards each other, who are bound together by a tie stronger and purer than any earthly tie—a tie which death has no power to break?

Imitating Him who was "meek and lowly in heart," his disciples will "put on humbleness of mind," they will "be clothed with humility," a grace not less conducive to the unity of the church than it is ornamental to the Christian character; for when Christians are found "each esteeming others bet-

ter than himself," and "in honour preferring one another," then there is love and peace. "If," says the Apostle Paul to the Philippians, "if there be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded; having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vain-glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." How important must the injunctions be which are enforced by such appeals!

That "love, which is the bond of perfection," prompts and requires Christians to exercise self-denial for the sake of their brethren; and this is especially the duty of those who are strong towards those who are weak. "We that are strong," says Paul, "ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one please his neighbour for his good to edification." Christians are to endeavour to minister at once to the improvement and delight of each other; and the conduct of Christ supplies the motive while it stands as the model—"For even Christ pleased not himself." And shall those who profess to be actuated by his spirit please themselves and offend their brethren? Shall they be reluctant to forego any enjoyments which the welfare of their brethren requires them to relinquish?

We have already seen that a difference of opinion subsisted among the members of the church at Rome respecting the use of certain kinds of food, and the

observance of certain rites of the Mosaic economy. One believed that he might eat all things, another, who was weak, restricted himself to herbs. We have found likewise, that they were commanded to allow each other full liberty to act according to their respective views, and to regard each other with respect and love. Neither of the parties were to despise those who differed from them, nor to impose restrictions on them. But this did not exhaust the requirements of the law of love. The strong were not only to refrain from imposing restrictions on the weak, not only to abstain from interfering with them in respect to indifferent matters; but for their benefit, they were to impose restrictions on themselves. Alas! how often have those possessed of power in the church pursued a course directly the reverse of this? "I know," says the Apostle in that admirable Form of Concord which he delivered to the Christians at Rome, and which has already repeatedly come under our consideration, "I know and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean. But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat for whom Christ died. . . . Let us follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another. For meat, destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil to that man who eateth with offence. It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing

whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak. Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth." A like tender regard for the consciences of weaker brethren, and anxious care to avoid every thing calculated to wound them, are inculcated on the Corinthians in reference to a parallel case—the eating of things offered to idols. And the apostle crowns and enforces his injunctions, by announcing his own determination in reference to such things: "If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend." Noble resolve! Illustrious manifestation of brotherly kindness! Had such a spirit always actuated all Christians, how different would have been the history of the church—how different its aspect now? In these admirable apostolic institutes, then, while the fullest liberty is given to every Christian to judge for himself, and to act agreeably to his convictions, in all unimportant matters, this liberty is guarded from abuse by the injunction not to use it in any way that might be offensive to the consciences of brethren, especially if they be "weak in the faith." Thus, while the enforcement of their peculiar views or observances on others is permitted to none, considerate and cheerful concession is enjoined on all; and this concession is to be regulated by the gentle, but powerful, law of "brotherly kindness," exemplified in the conduct of Christ and his apostles, and enforced by a solemn warning of the

guilt we will incur, if by any abuse of our liberty we "destroy the work of God"—cause to perish our "weak brother for whom Christ died." How nicely adapted to the constitution of man are the institutes of Heaven! They govern by the force of the highest principles—those principles which act as the inner springs of the movements of the soul.

Christians, "ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." Reflect on the extent of his self-denial for you, and then say if it is too great a return that you should deny yourselves a little for your brethren, in obedience to his command. He sought not his own pleasure; he consulted not his own ease; he shunned no pain; he shrunk from no suffering that he might save you; and shall ye seek your own pleasure at the risk of destroying his work—of causing to perish the souls he paid such a price to save? Ye profess to be constrained by his love, show then that ye are so by relinquishing enjoyments and usages, which you are bound by no law to retain, if they are offensive to those "little ones," for whom he has manifested such a tender regard.

But must we conceal our views of religious truth, and our conscientious convictions in regard to religious observances, because in these we may differ from our brethren? By no means. The maintenance of Christian unity requires no such course; so far otherwise, that such a course would ultimately

prove fatal to it by extinguishing that love of truth, and desire for its propagation, without which Christian unity were but a name. It is not from a calm statement or defence of opinions that effects inimical to Christian unity result, but from their being stated and defended in an unchristian spirit, and called in question, or refuted in such a spirit. Besides, he who would prevent the least of the disciples of Christ from stating and defending his views of truth in the spirit of meekness, and respect for those who differ from him, is not only a schismatic, but a spiritual despot. The essence of Romish tyranny operates in him. Any semblance of unity which may be produced by the suppression of freedom of enquiry and speech, can be only the adhesion of dormant masses—the coalescence of death.

The unity of the church, then, is not to be sought by any suppression or concealment of the truth; on the contrary, its unity is to be maintained, and its extension secured, by "speaking the truth"—by speaking it "in love." If the truth be not spoken, misconception and error will be allowed to prevail; and if it be not spoken in love, its salutary effects, both as respects the edification of the body of Christ, and the increase of its members, will be neutralized; for, unless truth be presented in a friendly aspect, it is almost sure to be repelled. How often has the most powerful argument borne, in its temper and spirit, an entirely counteractive force? Reasoning, however cogent and conclusive, will scarcely ever prove effective in dissipating prejudices, or over-

coming predilections, if it appear in the garb of acrimony or abuse. It is by the rays of the sun, warm as well as bright, that those vapours are dispelled which hide the green prospects of earth, and obscure the splendours of heaven. Where disaffection previously exists, wrathful or cutting words are sure to increase it; darts dipt in the venom of hatred cannot fail to inflame sores, but the arrow anointed with love pierces the heart to soften and heal.

While the truth should always be spoken in love, it must also be spoken in faithfulness—it must be thus spoken even in cases in which it may be very painful to do so:—"Thou shalt in anywise rebuke thy brother, and not suffer sin upon him." The law of love requires this. Our love to our brother would not be such as the gospel of Christ inspires, if it did not prompt us to endeavour to free him from the greatest of all evils, which the dominion of sin certainly is; and a good man will regard a rebuke, administered with meekness and tenderness, as a high proof of real love; for such a man will know that to have to administer a rebuke to a friend, is so distressing to an ingenuous mind, that nothing but that deep interest which love excites could impel such a mind to attempt it. In the spirit of the Psalmist, he will say, "Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness; and let him reprove, it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head."

Not less a dictate of true and healthful brotherly

love is the maintenance of scriptural discipline in the church;—this being equally indispensable to the real unity of single societies of Christians, and to the harmony and good understanding of the entire community of the faithful. In regard to this, the apostle thus exhorts Timothy,—"Those who sin rebuke before all, that others also may be afraid;" and Titus he commands to "rebuke with all authority." In the exercise of discipline, there is a most important distinction to be observed between those who may have fallen before temptation, and those who knowingly indulge in sin. The apostolic rule in reference to the former is, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye who are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness." But those who have apostatized from the faith, or who indulge in known sin, whether covertly or openly, are to be expelled from the church, and avoided by its members, and not to be received again, nor associated with, unless they manifest sincere repentance. "A man that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject." The apostle, after having enjoined the Corinthians to put away from them the incestuous person, embraced the suitable opportunity afforded him of recording, for all succeeding times, the rule of Christian procedure, in reference to any, bearing the name of a brother, who should indulge in habitual sin. "I have written to you in this epistle not to associate with fornicators. However, not universally with the fornicators of this world, and with the covetous, and with extortioners, and

with idolaters, since then, indeed, ye must go out of the world." That is, I do not mean to enjoin you to break off intercourse altogether with open sinners who are without the church, for in that case ye could not possibly conduct the necessary business of life. "But now, I write to you, not to associate with him; if any one called a brother be a fornicator, or a covetous person, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner, with such a person not even to eat."* The distinction we have adverted to as requiring to be made between these two classes of offenders, in their treatment by the church, harmonises with the Divine procedure. He who confesses and forsakes his sin finds mercy, and God restores his soul, but He "wounds the head of the wicked, and the hairy scalp of him that goes on in his trespasses."

And that the decisions of the church should be coincident with the decisions of heaven, as far as evidence can guide to such coincidence, is, we think, obvious from the nature of the functions of a church ruler, as exhibited in our Lord's investment of Peter with that office. "I say unto thee that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

* 1 Cor. v. 9–11. Macknight's Translation.

Substantially of the same import, though somewhat differently expressed, is his investment of his other disciples after his resurrection with official powers. "Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained." Whatever other miraculous powers the apostles possessed, they did not usually possess that of judging the hearts of men, (the case of Ananias and Sapphira was a peculiar one, in which such a power seems to have been specially communicated to Peter; but in the case of Simon Magus, we find that it was only after he had offered money in order to obtain the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit, that this same apostle perceived he was "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.") Neither was there delegated to the apostles any proper power of forgiving sins, for that is the incommunicable prerogative of God alone. The declarations of Christ, then, which we are now considering, can only imply, that the decisions of the church, when given according to the laws of Christ, are ratified by the coincident decisions of heaven. And that such is their meaning, we have still farther, and we think conclusive proof, in the use of similar language by our Lord, in connection with his rule regarding personal offences,—"Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

The excision of those who indulge in sin is dictated not less by love to their souls, than by a regard

for the purity and unity of the church. If such are "delivered unto Satan," it is "for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord." Excision from the church symbolizes that infinitely more awful separation, which is the certain result of living after the flesh—eternal exclusion from the presence of God, and from all his pure and happy creation, and consignment for ever to the pit of perdition—the fearful abode of "the devil and his angels." No situation on earth is so awful as that of exclusion, on scriptural grounds, from the church; and had not the laxity and sectarianism of modern times, by their combined pernicious influence, almost annihilated its moral power, than such a situation none can be conceived more adapted to impress on the soul a sense of its peril. He who stands there is declared an outlaw from the "kingdom of heaven," the citizenship of which he has forfeited by indulging in sin, and the place which he occupies gives him fearful premonition of the doom that awaits him unless he repent. On him the terrific shadows of coming wrath already fall, and he hears the distant murmurings of final doom, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire."

The prosperity and safety of the church require the exclusion of the wicked from her; retention of these within her is perilous to her proper members. Sin is contagious in its nature—it is assimilative like leaven; and, if allowed in the "household of God," its effects will be the more fatal by reason of the

privileged character of the place. "Know ye not," says the apostle, "that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump." The toleration in the church of those who are known to indulge in sin, produces a coalition of characters formed on principles essentially repugnant to each other,—a coalition not only perilous to those who enter into it, but subversive of real Christian fellowship.—"For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?" Christians are commanded to separate from every one called a brother who indulges in known sin; but if they are to observe this rule, they will be compelled to separate from the fellowship of churches which knowingly retain such in their communion. If with such they are not to eat, how can they keep the feast that is commemorative of Christ's dying love with them? Thus, the maintenance of the unity of the church requires the exercise of Christian vigilance in watching her portals, and of proper discipline towards offenders; inasmuch as the neglect of these occasions the withdrawal of those who are conscientious in the observance of the laws of Christ respecting the exclusion from his church of persons who live in sin.

It becomes us, however, to be careful not to judge rashly or uncharitably concerning the conduct of churches, and not to separate precipitately from

them, because we may conceive that they retain persons in their communion whom they ought not to retain, or allow sins to pass unreproved which they ought to reprove. Things, in these respects, may not present the same aspects to them which they do to us. While they may be not less anxious than we are to maintain scriptural discipline, the character of those whom we are inclined to regard as improper members may not have presented the same aspect to them which it has done to us. We, from limited and unfavourable opportunities of observation, or from other causes, may have seen only, or chiefly, its darker side, while its brighter and better side may have chiefly presented itself to them; consequently, they may not be aware of those evils in the character of the persons in question which may have presented themselves to us, or not aware of them at all to the same extent; and such may even sometimes be the case when those whose duty it is to watch for souls are not chargeable with negligence or indifference. To separate from a religious community, in such circumstances, without bringing what is offensive to us, fairly, and in the spirit of brotherly love, before its rulers, would be exceedingly improper. But even though a Christian society were chargeable with negligence, or with tolerating abuses, we would not be justified in departing from it without faithfully remonstrating with its members and officers, and endeavouring to bring them back to their duty. And especially would it become us, in all such cases, to scan our

own hearts well, in order to ascertain the real motives by which we are actuated, lest we should, in the spirit of pharisaic self-complacency, be saying unwittingly to any of our brethren, "Stand by, for I am holier than thou." The Christians associated together in the church at Corinth were guilty of a fearful dereliction of duty, in allowing to remain unreproved in their communion a person guilty of heinous sin; but the apostle did not on that account at once cease to regard them as a Christian church. On the contrary, he addressed them as such, remonstrating with them on the exceeding sinfulness of their conduct, solemnly warning them of its fatal consequences, and by his authority, as an inspired apostle, commanding them as a church, "in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ," to put away from among them the guilty individual; and reverting to threatening, only if they should disregard his injunctions and appeals. And he did not remonstrate with them in vain. His injunctions were obeyed, and they humbled themselves on account of their sins. Then, in what a lovely and commanding aspect does the ingenuous and noble mind of the apostle present itself to our view in his Second Epistle! How does he then rejoice over them as brethren reclaimed! How anxious does he appear to remove any painful impressions his former communication may have made; and what deep solicitude does he manifest concerning the now penitent offender! With what tender concern does he speak of him, as he enjoins them to treat him with compassionate kindness,

and to receive him again to their hearts! We would specially refer the reader to the second and seventh chapters of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, (for the passages are too long to quote,) as disclosing to view an ingenuousness and true nobility of character, entitled to the highest admiration, and which it well becomes us to endeavour to imitate.

In a similar manner did the apostle address the churches of Galatia, which had made serious lapses towards heresy. He was afraid lest he had bestowed labour on them in vain. He stood in doubt of them. Yet he addresses them as Christian societies; opens his epistle with a supplicatory benediction on them; and strives, by mingled objurgations, entreaties, warnings, and appeals, to bring them back to the only proper ground of Christian confidence and glorying—"the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The example of the apostle, in these cases, ought to guard us against precipitately separating from our brethren, or doing so on slight and doubtful grounds; and should incite us, if we think they are neglecting their duty, to endeavour, by all proper means, to bring them to attend to it. And, if we really love our brethren, nothing can be more painful to us than being compelled to separate from them. This will be the last thing we will do, and only when every expedient to reclaim them has failed. And even then we will leave them with reluctant yearnings of soul, corresponding, in their own limited measure, to those with which God gave up his unfaithful and backsliding people of old:—"How shall I give thee up,

Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together."

But when a church, notwithstanding faithful, patient, and affectionate remonstrance, continues to receive manifest unbelievers—persons whose conduct evinces that they are "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenant of promise," and to tolerate known and habitual sin, then there appears to be no course left but to separate from her communion. If it be regarded as a valid reason for continuing in communion with a church that acts unfaithfully, that there are good men in her, that is a reason which will conduct us too far—too far at least for Protestants, for there have been good men—men of transcendent excellence—in the Romish church, even in her worst days; yet no Protestant, we conceive, would regard that as a valid reason for continuing in her communion. Indeed, if that church be rightly identified, as she generally is identified, with the Apocalyptic Babylon, Christians have the solemn command of God to separate themselves from her: "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues."

A careful observance of the law of Christ regarding personal offences is intimately connected with the maintenance of Christian unity. "If thy brother trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between him and thee alone; if he shall hear thee,

thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it to the church; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican." Golden rule! Conceived how admirably in the spirit of that love which it is intended to embody and guard! When our brother has done aught against us, it is the dictate of affection to tell him his fault between us and him alone, as well as the true way to maintain "the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace." But to go and tell his fault to others without first endeavouring to gain him, is the dictate of disaffection, for we are forward to speak of the faults only of those whom we do not love, while it tends directly to generate schism by inflaming disaffection into anger and resentment. When we may be tempted to violate this law of Christ, (a violation, alas! how common,) we should reflect on that other injunction of His: "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them," and think how we would feel were our brother to act towards us as we may be about to act towards him; whether we would regard it as an indication of love to us, were he to go about and proclaim any offence we may have done him. And especially we should reflect that by thus acting, we will violate a commandment of Christ—of Him, who for our sakes "withheld not his face from shame and spitting," who counted not his life

dear unto him that he might save us;—a command given to secure an object so dear to his heart—given that all his people might be one in him.

Finally, the unity of the church is to be maintained by the Christian devotedness and activity of her members. Activity is the proper element of the spiritual, not less than of the animal constitution, in which alone it can flourish and attain its full development. The cells of cloisters, or the couches of indolence, are, to the spiritual nature, as dark and unventilated chambers to plants, occasioning decay and death by the exclusion of the elements of vitality and vigour. And, as the principles of the spiritual life decline, the bond of union must decay and weaken. On the other hand, whatever tends to invigorate the principles of the spiritual nature, must also strengthen the bond of union, for of these principles it is one of the chief. Extraneous to herself, there is but one object which can rightly engage the activities of the church—the conversion of sinners—of the world. And when once she shall have fairly, and in all her sections, devoted herself to this object, a unity of purpose and aim will actuate all her members; and there can scarcely be other than a very trifling diversity in the means employed for the accomplishment of this glorious object—or there can be no great diversity long, with any rational hopes of success.

SECTION V.

ADVANTAGES AND IMPORTANCE OF CHRISTIAN UNITY.

"BEHOLD how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard; that went down to the skirts of his garments; as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore." We may conceive the Psalmist to have been beholding a delightful scene of love and concord among his people, or, perhaps, in prophetic vision, contemplating the reign of the "Prince of Peace," when he broke forth into this beautiful and rejoicing song, comparing the blessing of unity among brethren to the most precious, pure, and delightful things, to the sacred oil wherewith the chosen priests of the Most High were anointed on their instalment into office, to the dew which refreshed and beautified the mountains of Israel—the

heritage of the Lord, God commanding his highest blessing as the crown of all—even the blessing of endless life.

The advantages of Christian unity are numerous and of the highest order; but we can here only advert to a few of the most prominent of them. In doing so, however, we trust that its unspeakable importance will appear to every reader.

Let us then, in the first place, consider the advantages resulting from Christian union to personal piety. "God created man in his own image;"—he made him mentally and morally to resemble himself;—furnished him with rudimental powers, possessing the capacity of continually receiving from his fulness of knowledge and bliss; and had he continued in his original condition, his soul would have been forever expanding and rising under the glowing light of the Eternal One. But man sunk into the depths of pollution and misery by sin—into a state, from which it required means altogether extraordinary to deliver him, or he was lost forever. Of the means which were adopted—of the scheme of saving mercy—the moral renovation of man is the end—his restoration to the likeness of God. God is emphatically love, and his love radiates out with ineffable fulness on all his holy creation. The restoration, then, of man to the Divine image must restore to his heart a love like that of God. "God is love, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him." Thus is there enjoyed a most amazing and inexpressibly intimate communion of spirit with God,

but it is enjoyed only by those that dwell in love: there can be no such communion without corresponding feeling; the delights of another's love can be enjoyed only by a respondingly loving heart. Were there an intelligent being altogether unsusceptible of love—if we might be allowed to imagine such a being to exist—no description or manifestation of it could give him any conception of its nature. But man by his fall did not lose his susceptibility of love to God, only there gathered on it such an incrustation of evil, as no ordinary manifestations of Divine goodness could penetrate. In order to reach this dormant susceptibility—to revive in our nature the prime element of purity and happiness, God manifested himself in flesh—in our nature displayed the exceeding greatness of his love; and the energy of his Spirit is put forth to impress the love, thus manifested, on the hearts of men; that thus love to God might be rekindled in them, and might again put in play all the right principles of their nature; making them to regard whatever God regards, and to hate whatever he hates; for this love, if more than a name, will not permit the predominance of any feeling but such as he approves. But love to God cannot exist alone. The soul in which it dwells must glow with love to all his redeemed children—the soul that does not thus feel gives evidence that the love of God dwells not in it. "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love."—"Herein is love, not

that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." By the moral law, we are bound to love our neighbour as ourselves, but that amazing manifestation of love which God has given in sending his Son, lays us under a new, and yet higher obligation to love those that are our brethren in a spiritual sense. The law, which emanates from the cross, makes a higher demand than that which issued from Sinai:—"This is my commandment," says our Lord, "that ye love one another, as I have loved you." This Divine injunction we have already endeavoured to illustrate and enforce.

But, further, love to the brethren—the bond of Christian unity—is, as we have already observed, the indispensable condition on which we are to continue to enjoy the love of Christ: "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love."—"This is my commandment, that ye love one another."—"This is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that ye love one another." And the manifestation to the soul of the love of Christ is that which kindles and maintains in it love to God and to Him, which love is the primary element of all moral excellence. "In his favour is life"—in it alone spiritual life is enjoyed—"and his loving-kindness is better than life." He is himself "the life," that is, "the light of men"—the sun of the soul, whose beams brighten up its blackness into beauty, and make it bring forth heavenly fruit.

"This is my commandment, that ye love one another;" and if "in keeping" the Divine "commandments there is great reward," there is so pre-eminently in the keeping of this:—"He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them," says our Lord, "he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. . . . If a man love me he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him." Exalted and amazing privilege! for a worm of the dust—a sinful worm, to be made the temple, yea, the dwelling-place of the Eternal King!—The abode of the triune Divinity! to have within him the very fountain of happiness! How shall we estimate the importance of that which is inseparably connected with the enjoyment of such a privilege! O! if we were sensible in any proper measure of the unspeakable benefits, and felt at all, as we ought to feel, the lofty delights of communion with an indwelling Deity, we would entertain quite another estimate of the importance of love to our brethren, when it is only in the exercise of that love that this communion is to be enjoyed; when *it* is the medium through which the vivifying light of the Divine countenance shines on the soul. How felicitous and ennobling to the human spirit is it to be admitted to enjoy such ineffable reciprocity of feeling with "the High and Holy One!" He who enjoys this interchange of love dwells in "the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High." From the storms that beat on the inhabitants of the

open world, he is protected by "the wings of the Almighty." He walks on the mount with God, in serene elevation, above the tumults and distressing anxieties of earth. Enjoying exuberance of spiritual provision—having "food to eat which the world knows not of," and drinking of "living waters" which gush from the lofty rock—temporal wants and privations press lightly on him; and for the future he trusts in God with unwavering confidence. "The Lord shall give that which is good." When painful occurrences pierce his spirit with anguish, and severe bereavements sink it in sorrow, he has a Friend of infinite and unchanging sympathy who has been "afflicted" "in all his afflictions;" who "has borne his griefs, and carried his sorrows," and who is ready and able to lift the burden from his soul. Like the beloved disciple, John, he reclines on the bosom of his Lord, and with "the everlasting arms" "around and underneath" him, he may well rest in unspeakable delight; for the assurances of the protection of Infinite Power, and the solacings of Infinite Love, fall sweeter than music on his ear. "Fear not, for I am with thee." "I am thy shield." "I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." Inspired by such assurances of a love so tender and solicitous, his soul is filled with rejoicing confidence, and breaks forth into singing, responding to its Saviour's voice —"The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?"—"Behold, God is

my helper; the Lord is with them that uphold my soul."—" I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people, I will sing unto thee among the nations; for thy mercy is great unto the heavens, and thy truth unto the clouds." And his love to his Lord and Master binds his heart to all who are dear to Him. It knows nothing of that selfishness which is jealous of rivals in the affections of a friend. His joy rises still the higher, as the numbers increase of those who are gladdened with the love of his illustrious Friend—who " walk on in the light of his countenance." He is anxious to persuade the " weary and heavy laden" to come to him that they may find rest; and he cannot remain at ease while so many are wandering on to destruction, in sad insensibility to their awful condition. " O that they were wise," is the aspiration which rises from the depths of his heart—" that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end." That which makes the happiness of heaven to swell into ecstasy —the repentance and return of sinners,—raises in his heart the highest and purest delight. Over the " lost" that have thus been restored, he, like his glorious Exemplar, " rejoices" even " with singing." And it is just in the outgoings of his affections towards others, and in his exertions in their behalf, that he finds his own felicity—in conducting the streams of Divine beneficence to the homes of the destitute and weary, he is refreshed and satisfied himself. For man is so constituted that it is only in dispensing good to others that he can be truly

blessed; so far as he makes his own enjoyment the end of his actions, he deprives himself of happiness. Pleasure springs in the freshness of a grateful spontaneity, only around the paths of beneficence.

The maintenance of Christian unity, while it is calculated to restrain and subdue the evil passions and propensities of our nature, brings into exercise all the virtues and graces of the Christian character —"the fruits of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." Love is the first of these fruits; and it is only in an atmosphere of love that the others can expand into their full development; for love is the only medium in which the Divine Spirit has scope to operate freely, and produce his highest fruits, being the proper element of his nature, for "God is love." Christians, meditate on your obligations to the Holy and Ever-blessed Spirit. He it was who unscaled your eyes to behold the true light from heaven. Though that light shone gloriously upon you, but for his tender and unwearied operations, you would have still refused it admittance; and would have continued blind to the glorious celestial machinery that was operating in your behalf, as was the servant of Elisha, till his eyes were opened, to the horses and chariots of fire which surrounded and protected his master. Think by what expedients, and with what unyielding assiduity, He has laboured to save you from perdition—to unite you to God, and to secure to you a happiness immeasurable and eternal. Remember that you

owe to his agency whatever competence you may have possessed for the performance of duty, whatever solace you may have experienced in affliction, whatever triumphs you may have gained over temptation, whatever brilliant visions of heavenly felicity and glory may have transported your souls; and can you think of these things, and not be deeply impressed with the unspeakable importance of cherishing that temper of mind, and cultivating those graces of character, in which such a Guide and Comforter delights? Can you reflect on these things, and not tremble at the thought of grieving or offending him? You enjoy the sublime distinction of being temples of the Holy Spirit! but remember it is a distinction accompanied with corresponding responsibility. Think then how incumbent it is on you to love one another, seeing in you the Spirit of Love dwells. And unless you *do* love one another—unless you be of one heart, and have one aim, how can you conclude, how can others believe, that you "have all been made to drink into one Spirit?"

Then, and in the second place, Christian unity is eminently conducive to the peace and happiness of families. The Divine wisdom appears conspicuously in those elements of the constitution of human nature, which occasion the division of mankind into families, inasmuch as these afford admirable scope for the cultivation and exercise of the virtues and graces of human character. It was the wise and

beneficent intention of heaven, that in them affection should operate in its tenderest forms,—conjugal, parental, filial, and fraternal. There occasion is never wanting for the exercise of kindness and care, and for the reciprocation of good offices of all sorts. Had man continued faithful to God and holy, the homesteads of earth would have been graced with every virtue—they would have constituted moral gymnasia, in which the young heirs of immortality would have been trained and exercised for heaven. But sin marred the happiness of the domestic circle—nipped it in the germ; and sin has filled the abodes of men with envy, contention, jealousy, strife, hatred, and every evil passion, and made them too often no faint emblems of that final and fearful home of evil, to which it is to be feared too many of their inmates have gone; and for which, alas! multitudes of them have furnished evidence of awful fitness. Christianity aims at the restoration of peace and happiness to families by the moral renovation of their members. It implants that love in the heart, and enjoins its cultivation, which prompts to the cheerful discharge of all relative duties. And if ever the religion of Christ becomes the occasion not of "peace," but of "a sword," in the abodes of men, this is solely to be attributed to the opposition which it meets with from the evil passions and propensities of the human heart—is therefore owing not at all to its proper influence, but to the obstruction of that influence. No where is the maintenance of Christian unity of greater importance, or productive of more

happy effects, than around the domestic hearth. The meetings of Christians, in the capacity of churches or congregations, is only hebdomadal and occasional; but the members of a Christian family dwell together; and "how good and how pleasant is it for" them "to dwell together in unity!" What does earth exhibit more delightful or more noble than a whole family pursuing their pilgrimage, side by side, and hand in hand, through the wilderness of this world, to the "better country," the land of rest;—bearers of each other's burdens, and helpers of each other's joy; ever reflecting—on the darkness around them—the pure and vivifying light of heaven.

Farther, and in the third place, Christian unity is an essential element of a healthful condition of the church. Christ is the head from which his church derives vital influence and energy; but in order that these may be freely and equably diffused through the body, it is necessary that its parts should be connected together. True it is, the church is vital in every member, and these members will retain a measure of life even though torn from each other; but it is only the life of the reptile that crawls in the dust,—a sickly and somnolent existence, ever tending to death, the possessors of which are too feeble to stand erect, and utterly unfit to confront and subdue their foes. But were the various fragments of the church that now creep along the dust feeble and fretful, united into one body, a vital energy, of which, in our present condition, we can form no

adequate conception, would rush into every member, and the whole would move with an unwonted freedom and celerity, displaying such strength in action, and such majesty of mien, as would make foes to yield or stand aside in awe, and soon leave pretended friends at a confounding distance behind.

Many of the advantages accruing to the church from unity among her members have already come under our notice, and others will present themselves in the course of this Essay; we judge it, therefore, unnecessary to enter on any detailed statement or illustration of them in this place, and hasten on to the next particular, merely remarking, as we pass, that the church was intended to be an asylum of rest and peace in the midst of a stormy and troubled world, until the troubles and evils of the world should yield to its power,—a place of refuge in which the wretched might ever find friends, ready, like angels of mercy, to bind up the broken heart, and to anoint the wounded spirit with the balm of consolation. But ere she can rightly discharge such functions of mercy, she must be pervaded by a spirit of tender and compassionate love—by the spirit of her Head.

But above all, and in the fourth place, the importance and advantages of Christian unity appear in its influence on the world.

The night had come when the Messiah was to be cut off, when he had to make "his soul an offering for sin"—the fearful hour of death was at hand. Already might be heard the clang of the Roman arms,

and the shouting of the ruffian multitude as they prepared to advance to seize him. Now he knew he must deliver himself into their hands, be forsaken by all his disciples, derided and abused by his countrymen, condemned by the Roman governor, and nailed to the cross. In such a situation, what was it that engaged his thoughts? He had just finished his valedictory discourse to his disciples—a discourse of unparalleled tenderness, and pregnant with the most momentous instruction, and the richest consolation; and was engaged in earnest intercession with his Father, and the burden of his prayer had been the welfare of his people. But the Roman cohort, led on by the traitorous disciple, and surrounded by the rabid multitude, would soon be upon him—the hour of the travail of his soul had come—the malignant inhabitants of Hades were crowding in from all quarters to assail him, and God the Father was just about to hide his face and unsheath the sword of justice. He must conclude his prayer. And what was the last thing which pressed on his heart? The union of his people in order to the conversion of the world. "I pray . . . that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us: THAT THE WORLD MAY BELIEVE THAT THOU HAST SENT ME. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved

me." What must be the importance of the objects iterated with such circumstantial earnestness of supplication by our Lord in such an hour! Who shall estimate that importance? None were competent to do so, but one who could estimate the importance of the objects for which Christ became the substitute of man, and delivered himself to death, for these are they—the salvation of the world—the reunion of men to God and to each other. The union of his people, for which Christ prayed with such fervency, must be not merely that invisible spiritual union which subsists among them as being all in him, and all possessed of the same spiritual nature; but a union visible to all, else what evidence of his Divine mission could it furnish to the world? An union in operations it must be as well as of hearts; an identity of aim and effort even like that subsisting in the Father and Son.

The evidence of the Divine origin of Christianity has been augmenting through every age. The gospel of Christ has been proved to be from heaven by many a separate line of argument, and by many ever-increasing classes of facts: yet as respects the great majority of mankind, this proof superabounds in vain. The specious sophistry and flippant cavillings of infidelity have been fully exposed, Christianity has come forth from the ordeal of philosophic scepticism, more manifest in strength, and with brightened glories; and yet the world continues faithless as before. Evidence of the heavenly nature of Christianity is wanted that shall speak to the

heart, not merely documentary proof, but proof in the life; evidence that shall press on the attention of men on all sides, and at every step, embodied in a general purity and elevation of Christian character, and in the workings of a charity that never faileth. It is only the living "epistles of Christ" that are "known and read of all men." The members of the church at Jerusalem were "all of one heart and of one soul." They "sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all, as every man had need." And we are informed, that they enjoyed "favour with all the people," and that "believers were added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women." The mutual affection of the early Christians made even their enemies to exclaim, "Behold how they love one another!" and they could rejoicingly join with the apostle in giving thanks to God, that he always caused them to triumph in Christ, and made manifest the savour of his knowledge by them in every place. Alas! succeeding ages have not beheld such scenes of love, and consequently have witnessed no such triumphs of the faith. Christianity has now well nigh run two thousand years of its course, and yet the appalling fact stands out before us, that Christ is as far from receiving the homage of the nations, as he was in the first century of its existence, if not even farther still! And how could we expect it to be otherwise, when Christians have manifested so little of the distinctive character and spirit which their religion requires, and so much of a character and spirit which

it condemns? How could it be otherwise, when Christianity has so long been buried beneath such a mass of corruptions and abuses; when its professors have so long neglected the proper means and instruments for its propagation; when the nations bearing the Christian name have made the iron of their cruelty to enter the very souls of every tribe and people over whom they have obtained dominion or power; and when those professing to be the disciples of the holy and merciful Saviour have been found, with most mournfully few exceptions, ever corrupting, enslaving, and exterminating the natives of every region of the earth where they have gone?

All kinds of power and influence have been largely brought to bear on mankind, except the power of love. Conquest has done its appalling work times without number, and has but added fearfully to the guilt and miseries of mankind. Whatever changes it may have produced in other respects, as regards their moral character, men have continued the same. States have risen to the proudest eminence in the fine arts and literature, have shone resplendent with the lights of genius, and, notwithstanding, have sunk into the rottenness of a luxurious dissolution. Ecclesiastical power, in multifarious phases, has held in subjection the nations; but as respects the moral renovation of mankind, it too has signally failed. Science is now spending her strength; and though, in regard to his physical condition and mental acquisitions, she has conferred innumerable benefits on man;—so far as that strength

is applied to effect, directly and unaided, his moral renovation, she is spending it "for nought, and in vain." The only principle that is fitted to regenerate the world has been cast aside and forgotten, not only by the world—we would have anticipated that—but also by the church—the church which was constituted and appointed to conserve and apply it.

Christ came into the world as the substitute of man—of man considered as a criminal obnoxious to the punitive justice of God. He obeyed the law, and endured the curse, "That whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." And it was his earnest desire that all might be saved. But the knowledge of the means of salvation was not to be communicated to all mankind, either by Christ himself in person, or by any course of supernatural agency, apart from the agency of man. It was by the agency of men themselves that this knowledge was appointed to be diffused. The disciples of Christ were commanded by him to "preach the gospel to every creature," and to cherish in their hearts, and manifest in their lives, the spirit which he displayed—that unquenchable compassionate love which brought him from the heights of glory to the seat of malefactors, and the agony of the cross. And the Divine principle of love was to bind them all together in a union, even like that subsisting between the Father and the Son. That the world might be convinced that the founder and head of a fraternity so strangely alien from the sel-

fishness of earth—so strangely exalted above its grovelling pursuits, must be of God. That it might be attracted by the peace and loveliness of the Christian community, and contemplating, as reflected there, the character of Christ, might become ashamed of its hostility to one so gloriously beneficent, might be led to deep repentance for its heinous sins, and be brought humbly to sue for mercy at the feet of him whom it had formerly rejected and despised. Christians are declared to be the light of the world, and when all combined together, they resemble a constellation of commanding glory, and attractive brilliancy; but when broken up into many widely separated parties, they lose their imposing aspect, and their feeble light struggles in vain through the thick and polluted atmosphere of the world.

Disciples of Jesus, turn your eyes upon the past, and think what for long and gloomy ages has been the state of the world, and the character of the church. Think how sadly the reverse of "the light of the world," and "the joy of the whole earth," the church has been during by far the larger portion of the time she has existed,—how sadly the reverse of the abode of liberty and peace. Think of the countless myriads that age after age have gone down to the dust, unvisited by that radiance which she should have caught from heaven, and reflected on the world; and which she did not catch and reflect, because she fell from her "first love," and became polluted in the dust. Think of the myriads more who have been deceived by the spe-

cious but deep delusions which she has propagated, or which have gained countenance from her; and of the myriads yet more who have felt the iron of her despotism enter their souls. Look abroad on the world in its present condition: three-fourths of its inhabitants yet ignorant of Christ, the victims of delusion, the slaves of sin, "hateful and hating one another;" and the vast majority of those that remain acknowledging him but in name, "enemies to him in their minds, and by wicked works." Think of seven hundred millions of the existing generation hastening to their final state, alienated from God, assimilated to Satan, and under his power. Consider what these might have been had Christians loved as they ought their Redeemer and each other, and pitied as they ought those who are estranged from God. Turn then to the prayer of your Lord for his people, that they all might be one, that the world might believe that the Father had sent him; and with all these things in your view, attempt to estimate if you can the importance of Christian unity.

Then turn your eyes to the future, and contemplate those brilliant pictures of the future glory of the church, which ancient prophets have drawn, as they appear under the pure and vivid light shed on them by the Christian economy—pictures which yet appear untarnished, undimmed, yea, and which will ever retain their freshness and beauty. Look at Zion, "the city of the Great King," shining resplendent with the glory of the Lord, commanding

the riches of all the nations, and receiving the homage of those that were before her oppressing foes; the Gentiles walking in her light, and "kings in the brightness of her sun-rising."—"Violence heard no more in her land, nor wasting nor destruction within her borders," her protecting "walls, salvation," and the "gates" of her defence "praise." And, while contemplating the church as thus pourtrayed in the brightness of her glory, reflect, that this is a glory with which she can never be invested, until all her members be joined together in "the unity of the Spirit, and the bond of peace."

Then again contemplate the prosperity of the church under another order of imagery—view her as the mountain of the house of Jehovah, established on the top of the mountains, and exalted above the hills, and behold all nations flowing unto it. Listen to the "many peoples" meeting each other with the joyful invitation, "Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah, to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths." Behold them beating "their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks;" the inhabitants of every land living in undisturbed security, and amidst exhaustless abundance of all good things. And while you contemplate these delightful scenes, reflect that it is the power of love alone that can transform destructive weapons into instruments of tillage—that love will

be the safe-guard which will then protect the happy families of man.

Once more, contemplate the church as the kingdom of Messiah. Behold the vastness of his dominion extending "from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth." View him receiving the homage of all nations, and all kings. Observe the prostration of his enemies, as they "lick the dust." Behold the riches of the earth brought to his feet—"the gold of Sheba"—and presents from "the kings of Tarshish and the isles." Contemplate the increase and prosperity of his subjects—"In his days shall the righteous flourish"—"There shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon: and they of the city shall flourish like the grass of the earth." Think of the equity of his administration—"He shall judge thy people with righteousness. . . . He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor." Then consider the peacefulness and harmony of his dominions—"The mountains shall bring forth peace to the people;" under his reign there shall be "abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth." And the benignity of his government—"Men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed." And, lastly, the perpetuity of the glory of his name—"His name shall endure forever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun."

Christians, contemplate these splendid pictures of

the glory of the church, when the world shall have believed in Christ and submitted to his dominion. Think of the glory with which your Redeemer will then be crowned, in the eyes of all nations; and of the infinite delight with which he will contemplate such results of the "travail of his soul." Contrast the love, and peace, and happiness, which mankind will then enjoy, with the hatred, and strife, and miseries, with which the earth now abounds. Think of the uninterrupted stream of sanctified spirits that will then be thronging into the mansions above, in contrast with the solitary souls that are now at intervals arriving there! Then, think with what complacency the Eternal Father will behold such a rapid increase of the citizens of his celestial kingdom! Long had his heart yearned over his erring and deluded children of the dust: "O that there were such an heart in them that they might fear before me always," had been the utterance of his compassion;—"O that my people had hearkened to my voice." And now at length his desire is fulfilled, and "he rests in his love," and rejoices over his redeemed "with singing." Think, Christians, of these things, and as your "hearts burn" at the contemplation of them, say, if you can, what must be the importance of that union which is to usher in such scenes!

And turn not away, till you have listened awhile to the tones of the prophetic harp, as it announces this union and its glorious results. Notes of more intense delight never thrilled upon its strings.—

" How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth. Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion. Break forth into joy, shout together, ye waste places of Jerusalem. Jehovah hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God."

Then, and in the last place, the advantages and importance of Christian unity would no doubt appear yet more prominently, were we fully aware of the nature and amount of the influence exercised by the church over other parts of the moral universe. From some intimations given in Scripture, we have reason to conclude that the church exercises a momentous influence on even the higher orders of the intelligent creation, and serves purposes in the moral government of God, of which, in our present condition, we can form no adequate conception. Angels are represented as intently looking into the wonders of the redeeming economy; and the church is declared to be the medium through which the abundance of Divine wisdom is disclosed to the principalities and powers of heaven: " Unto me," says Paul, " who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make

all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which, from the beginning of the world, hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God." But the church can only very defectively fulfil the important function of manifesting to the higher orders of the intelligent creation this manifold wisdom, so long as she continues rent into fragments and polluted in the dust; so unlike that which her Divine head would have her to be, who, in his love, "gave himself for the church, that he might sanctify and cleanse it . . . that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle; . . . holy, and without blemish." How long, alas! have "the principalities and powers in the heavenly regions" looked in vain for the full development of the manifold wisdom of God in the church on earth! How long may they have yet to look in vain unless her members cultivate another spirit!

"The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," says Paul, in his Epistle to the Ephesians, "having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he hath purposed in himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are in earth, even in him;" whom he hath set "at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and

dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body."—" It pleased the Father," says the same apostle, in his Epistle to the Colossians, " that in him [Christ] should all fulness dwell: and (having made peace through the blood of his cross) by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven." The church is the body of Christ; and, as such, is destined to constitute the nucleus of that vast and extended union which God the Father is to form of all things in him. And should not the church on earth show herself in some measure worthy of the station she is to occupy in heaven?

And now, Christian brethren, beloved in the Lord, do you value the health and comfort of your souls; and, surely, whatever else you regard, you must value these? Then, remember that you can enjoy these only in the element of love. Do you desire to manifest gratitude to him who gave himself a ransom for you,—who, for your sakes, endured the cross, and despised the shame? Show, then, that you do so by obeying his commandment,—by loving each other, and treating each other kindly for his sake. If you are at all worthy of the name you bear, you will value the light of the Divine countenance above all things; you will esteem the loving-kindness of your Lord better than life. But you must re-

nember, that you cannot expect you will continue to enjoy these, unless you cherish love to your brethren, minister to their wants, and exercise self-denial for their sakes. Do you desire that there should be love and concord in the home where you dwell? Would you wish to present on the domestic altar the offering of united love? Then, study to adorn yourselves with "the meekness and gentleness of Christ." Are you deeply interested in the prosperity of the church? Would you wish to see her "arise" and "shine?" Would you behold her lengthening her cords, and strengthening her stakes, breaking forth "on the right hand and on the left," and possessing "the gates of her enemies?" Then, "seek the truth and peace." Study "the things that make for peace, and things whereby one may edify another." As you have opportunity, do good to all men; especially embrace every fit occasion of doing good to their souls. Seek friendly intercourse with real Christians of every name; let no differences of opinion alienate your hearts from those that are dear to your Lord. "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem;" let her interests be near your hearts. "They shall prosper that love" her. Approach the throne of the heavenly grace, and give no rest to him that sitteth thereon, "till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth."

Do you reflect with profound sorrow on the melancholy truth, that ever since the introduction of Christianity into the world, by far the greater portion of its inhabitants have been allowed to go down

to the grave as if no salvation had been provided for them,—as ignorant of a Saviour as if none had appeared. Think what have been the principal causes of this fearful neglect of the souls of men by the church; and so far as they yet remain or operate, exert yourselves to the utmost, as far as your power and influence extend, for their removal. See, especially, that no impediment to the diffusion of the saving knowledge of Christ over all the earth be allowed to remain in your own hearts or conduct. Are you affected by the appalling condition of the world considered in respect to its moral character? and will you not cherish in your hearts that love which is declared by infallible authority to be a main instrument for its renovation? Do seven hundred millions of your fellow-men, the prey of the destroyer, move your pity? and will you not unite with your brethren that you may rescue them from his fangs? If the aphorism is just in reference to secular affairs, that "union is strength," it is so with tenfold emphasis in reference to the agency of the church; for there union embodies the strength of God. And who shall say what might be the magnitude of the effects, were the church advanced to a condition in which she would draw forth the fulness of his power—in which she would make his arm to be revealed?

O, then, if your hearts respond to the spirit of your Lord in the ardour of his desire for the redemption of the world; if you feel at all, as you ought to feel, the weight of his authority when he commands;

if you can be melted under his tender and earnest entreaties—under the outpourings of his heart; if wretchedness and woes that never cease can move your pity; if vice in many horrid forms can excite your abhorrence; if you would desire to behold the word of the Lord have "free course and be glorified" in every land; if you would see, from all points of the compass, "the fulness of the Gentiles" pouring into the church, and "all Israel saved?" Then, open your hearts to the holy influences of love—that love which emanates from the cross—which glowed in the heart of the illustrious Sufferer there—which embraced even his foes. And, O! let his earnest prayer for his people be yours, that "they all may be one"—that the world may receive him as "the sent of God." Cherish and manifest that charity which "hopeth and endureth all things," and which "rejoiceth in the truth," by whomsoever it may be proclaimed; and if any of your brethren be otherwise minded, pray that their eyes may be opened—that their temper may be changed; and imitate your Divine Master, in "not rendering railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing:" so shall you enjoy the high honour, and the elevating satisfaction, of co-operating with him in healing the breaches of Zion; and the blessing of the peace-makers shall descend on your heads.

And now, would to God that here we could close!—that we had been tracing the lines of the church not merely as she ought to be, but of the church as she is; and had only to pray—O Lord,

establish her for ever, and let the whole earth continue to be filled with thy glory; and could respond the triumphant song of the Psalmist of old—"Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion, the city of the great King. The Lord is known for a refuge in her palaces." But, alas! a task of a different kind awaits us, to which, in dependence on Divine aid, we must now address ourselves.

PART SECOND.

SCHISM.

SECTION I.

NATURE AND DISTINCTIVE CHARACTER OF SCHISM.

THE church, as we have seen in the preceding part of this work, is frequently represented in the New Testament as the body of Christ, deriving vital influence and nourishment from him as its head, and knit together by a love diffused from him, pervading every member, and acting as the vital and connecting principle in all. The Apostle Paul informs the Ephesians, that when Christ "ascended up far above all heavens," he "gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." And in his Epistle to the Colossians, the same apostle designates Christ "the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together,

increaseth with the increase of God." Likewise in his First Epistle to the Corinthians, he makes use of the same figure, illustrating, in detail, the functions of the various classes of the members of the church, and the spirit which should actuate them all, by the functions and relations of the various members of the human body; inculcating on the Corinthians the duties of mutual esteem and love, though differing in gifts, and in offices in the church; because, as the various members of the body have been assigned their respective stations and functions by God according to his good pleasure, so likewise have the members of the church. "As the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body being many, are one body; so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member but many. . . . And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee, nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay much more, those members of the body which seem to be more feeble are necessary, and those members of the body which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need, but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked: that there should be no schism in the body; but that the members

should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." If any of the members of our bodies be injured or suffer in any way, all the other members suffer with it: the pain which it feels affects all the rest. And so should it be in the church; each member ought to esteem, and love, and sympathize will all the others, as if they constituted parts of himself. Thus it is that the unity of the Christian body is to be maintained. Schism is the rending of this unity—the severance of the members of the body of Christ by disaffection among themselves. Every kind of separation among brethren which results from disaffection partakes of the nature of schism; for if love be the bond of Christian unity, schism must be the result of the breaking of that bond—a schism or separation at least of hearts, and of all kinds of separation this is the most to be deplored, and produces the most pernicious effects. Any semblance of unity which may remain after love is gone, is not Christian unity, for of that it wants the essential principle; it can only be an ecclesiastical coalition or combination, held together by other bonds than those of true Christian fellowship. Thus disaffection—hatred, incipient or matured, is the essence of a schismatic spirit. And a schismatic spirit, as it is the direct antagonist of love in its nature, is not less so in regard to its effects. Let love maintain its hold, and it will not permit se-

paration at many points, but disaffection quickens exceedingly the perception, and magnifies the importance of differences in religious views, and thus tends ever to widen and extend breaches among brethren; love inclines us to put the best construction on the conduct of others, but disaffection prompts us to put the worst.

Schism, in its full development, is an open rent or rupture in the church—a visible separation of Christians from fellowship and communion with each other. The schisms in the Corinthian church appear to have been far advanced towards this, if they had not actually reached it. "When ye come together in the church," says the apostle to them, "I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it. . . . When ye come together, therefore, into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper. For in eating, every one taketh before other his own supper; and one is hungry, and another is drunken. What! have ye not houses to eat and drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I praise you not." Among other fearful irregularities in the Corinthian church in the observance of the Lord's Supper, for which the apostle thus forcibly and solemnly reproves its members, it appears that there were schisms or divisions among them; they partook of the sacred symbols in parties, not waiting for each other, as is manifest from the apostle's subsequent injunction,—"My brethren, when ye come

together to eat, tarry for one another." The Jewish Christians manifested a deeply schismatic spirit on many occasions, when, in their blind zeal for the law of Moses, they desired or endeavoured to enforce its observance on Gentile converts; or to withdraw from communion with them because they did not observe it.

The association of Christians in societies or churches under different forms of church polity, we have already endeavoured to show to be perfectly compatible with Christian unity, and if such be the case, it cannot constitute schism, nor be productive of it, if the peculiar views, or distinctive forms of these churches, be not constituted terms of communion. Let us suppose, for example, that a number of Christians should, with earnest prayer for Divine direction, set themselves to inquire what form of church polity is most agreeable to Scripture: And let us suppose that a portion of these should adopt views of this matter, very considerably different from those adopted by the rest; and farther, that both parties should proceed to form themselves into Christian societies or churches, on what appears to them respectively the plan most agreeable to Scripture. If each of these churches leave the way open for any of the members of the other who may choose to join in communion with it, without requiring such either to renounce their own peculiar views, or to adopt those which distinguish its members; if each of these churches be ready to receive the members of the

other simply as brethren in Christ, neither of them is schismatical.

Separation from persons bearing the name of brethren, who are not careful to act agreeably to the will of God, so far as they are acquainted with it, is not schism; so far from being so, it is expressly enjoined, "We command you," says Paul to the Christians of Thessalonica, "in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received from us." And writing to Timothy he says, "If any man . . . . consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness, ... from such withdraw thyself."

Separation from those who are active as schismatics in sowing "discord among brethren" is not schism, for separation from these is expressly enjoined. "Now, I beseech you," says Paul to the Christians at Rome, "I beseech you, brethren, mark them who cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them."

But we are not to separate from our brethren, merely because they may in some way have offended us. When any of them may have done so, the law of Christ is—a law to which we have already adverted—that we should state our grievance to him privately, and if he hear us, we have gained our

brother; if he do not hear us, we are to take with us one or two more, and if he neglect to hear them, we are to communicate the matter to the church, and it is only if he shall contemn the authority of the church that we are to separate from him; and in that case, separation is not schism; for he who does not submit to the proper decisions of the church, resists the authority of its Head, and consequently forfeits his right to communion with the saints; he is to be treated as an "heathen man and a publican." In short, no separation or excision of persons from the church is to be regarded as involving schism, unless those be cut off who, on Scriptural grounds, are entitled to be regarded as Christians—as persons in union with Christ.

That hatred which is occasioned by differences regarding the religion of Christ, and which is the essence of schism, constitutes one of the most obscure and extraordinary phenomena of the human mind. It differs so widely from hatred which springs from any other source,—it possesses at once such profundity and virulence, such tenacity of life and keen-edged venom, as widely distinguish it from hatred of every other sort. The human mind possesses unfathomed profundities, which neither the interests and cares of this world, nor its animosities and sorrows, ever reach. These agitate, as it were, but its surface; it is only the "powers of the world to come"—of endless existence in happiness or woe—which stir it to its utmost depths. The ordinary kinds of animosity and hatred regard their objects

only as existing in this life—even the most deep-seated revenge pursues its victim but to death; it is quenched with his blood. But in the light of Christianity, man is contemplated as the heir of another—an endless life, either of intense suffering, or unutterable enjoyment; and hatred on religious grounds bears on its objects as existing for ever—it aims at the destruction of the immortal spirit; and that being perceived to be impossible, but exacerbates it the more, and impels it to attempt the destruction of its happiness. Thus, the Inquisition—that horrid product of schismatic cruelty—when it had bound its victims to the stake, not satisfied with consuming the body, delivered them over to its patron, "the devil, who stood at their elbow ready to receive their souls, and carry them into the flames of hell fire." That the joy resulting from contemplating the objects of our love, as the heirs of everlasting and inconceivable glory, does not produce agitation in the mind corresponding to that produced by schismatic hatred, is to be accounted for chiefly from the nature of happiness, and the original adaptation of the mind to its enjoyment. The purest joy produces the least strain on the heart, because the heart was formed originally to be its permanent abode; its entrance, therefore, produces no tumult, unless what may be occasioned by the flight of its foes.

But that gloomy ferocity, which, in circumstances favourable to its development, becomes the ruling passion of the confirmed schismatic, being utterly

repugnant to the original constitution of the human mind, cannot subsist there without subjecting it to continual stress, and keeping it in perpetual commotion. Even the pleasures of such a mind—if it can enjoy anything deserving of the name of pleasure—must be of a murky and turbid kind, resembling what we may conceive to be the gratifications of those rapacious monsters that lurk in dens and jungles during the brightness of day, disrelishing the free and exhilarating light of heaven, and issue forth during the darkness of night, or amid the gloom and commotion of the tempest, to disport themselves in seizing their prey. Or—that spirit which can be put into paroxysms of exultation and rejoicing, by beholding the innocent and the excellent of the earth in inconceivable agony, burning slowly to death at a stake, may well claim kindred in its temperament and character with the chiefs of hell.

The fearful prevalence of schism, during every age of the existence of the church, seems to indicate that there must be something in its nature peculiarly congenial to the human spirit, in its present fallen and debased condition. This hydra of the church began to thrust up its heads under the very eyes of the apostles themselves; and ever since their times it has continued to operate as the most fatal antagonist of the gospel—transmuting that richest boon of heaven—that wondrous development of Divine wisdom and grace, into corrosive and deadly poison. Seeing that the principles of Christian unity are so

copiously and clearly stated in Scripture, and seeing adherence to them in spirit and conduct is enforced by such solemn and awful sanctions; by what fatal perversity of our nature is it that those who were bound to have ever acted on these principles, have continued to evince such a proneness to their violation? That such is the corruption and perversity of human nature, might by some minds be deemed a sufficient and satisfactory reply to such an enquiry. True it is that this melancholy proneness of professing Christians to schism, furnishes one of the strongest proofs of the inveteracy of the corruption of our nature; and not less true is it, that all the evils, of whatever form or phase, which dishonour God, and afflict humanity, spring directly or indirectly from its depravity. Still they derive their specific character from specific causes or influences; and such, we think, will be found to be the case in regard to the proneness of the church to schism.

Man was originally constituted to worship Jehovah, and to serve him only, but since his fall, "gods many, and lords many," of widely different characters and natures, have drawn to them the homage of his heart. Still possessed of its original instincts, though sadly misdirected, the mind of man must ever have something possessed of power, beyond that of which it is itself possessed, or conceived to be so, to which to cling. And man having withdrawn the devotion of his heart from "the only living and true God," not only has his fertile imagination replenished the universe with hosts of divi-

nities demanding his worship; but, agreeably to that propension downwards, which is so prominent a feature of his present moral character, the homage of his love, arrested by visible and terrene objects, often stops short of all invisible power, *that* being yielded only the scanty and reluctant quit-rent of fear. Not to mention meaner objects at present; a man who is somehow distinguished above others often receives the homage of his fellows. Thus the patriarchal chief or leader receives the real homage of the hearts of the nomadic or marauding clan. And among idolaters farther advanced in civilization, renowned conquerors have generally been quite as much the objects of adoration as their patrons in the sky, if not, after their death, actually promoted to take rank with them. And some of the most idealistic of the ancient philosophers appear to have given the highest homage of their hearts to their native state or city, which received in their minds a kind of personified apotheosis. Now, regarding mankind as what they ought to be, one general brotherhood, devotion to such objects is manifestly of factious tendency, for the more ardently devoted that the heart is to any such object, the more intensely will jealousy and hatred burn in it towards every thing advancing claims to rivalship. Devotion to anything beneath the Universal Governor and Eternal King must be essentially factious.

The mind of man, then, is parasitic in its character; if it is to rise to eminence, it must have some-

thing to support it while it climbs. Christ came into the world that men might ascend to moral excellence and happiness, by cleaving to him. He was lifted up on the cross that he might draw all men after him to the heights of glory. But as man, by his original transgression, severed himself from that connection with God, by which he was supported as a moral agent; continuing in enmity to Him, he has ever evinced a fearful reluctance to the renewal of this connection, notwithstanding that God has continued to make the most tenderly pressing overtures for the accomplishment of this: And even although God the Word manifested himself in flesh, that, by such a display of his infinite love, man might be moved to return to God, and have his happy connection with him renewed; still, rather than be attached to the only Object by which he can ascend to that place in creation for which he was destined, he will cling to whatever feeble or "broken reed" may be within his reach—to objects which, when depended on, must occasion a second and greater fall.

This propensity of the heart to cleave to inferior objects yielded at first to the religion of the cross, wherever the heart was opened to receive it as it came, with the fulness of the energy of the Eternal Spirit, and would certainly have been subdued and held in check, had that religion been preserved in its pristine purity and vigour; but as its purity became contaminated, and its vigour paralyzed, terrene polytheism gained footing in the church,

and made fatal progress there. For not only as the church verged towards the great apostacy were the rites of heathenism—scarcely altered but in name—amalgamated with the Christian institutions, and the gods of mythology transmuted into saints; not only in the Romish church did factious religious orders (so called) spring up with a baneful luxuriance—nothing being required to secure a host of devoted adherents, but that an ardent fanatic should strike out some new phase of extravagance; and not only, as the crowning product of the propensity in question, was the Roman Pontiff exalted "above all that is called God, or that is worshipped," but even before the long and dismal era of Romish ascendancy, and since its power has been broken, in times, and among men of comparative enlightenment, the polytheistic spirit (for so we must name it in lack of a more appropriate term) has operated in fearful extent and predominance. How often, in what have been regarded as the best times of the church, has the religious leader, the creed, or the sect, been the object of a most undue and pernicious devotedness; just as among the more refined polytheists of the ancient world—the renowned warrior, or the paternal state, were yielding a deep and idolatrous homage. Such undue devotedness is, as we shall soon have occasion to show, one of the main and most prolific causes of schism. In our own times these evils are far from being extinct; Christians are still found ranging themselves under leaders in defence of sectarian systems; and from many we

hear far more frequently of the doctrines and standards of "our church," or of the views of "our connexion," "than of the word of our God;" and if "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," what can we conclude but that these are the objects of a higher regard?

SECTION II.

SOURCES OF A SCHISMATIC SPIRIT.

A SCHISMATIC temper, like the slimy Nile, takes its rise from, and is fed by, two main sources—misconception and pride; but far from resembling that mighty river in fertilizing the regions which it overspreads, it is rather like the simoom of the desert, which in its course extinguishes life, and scorches up every green thing.

Misconceptions respecting the character of God, combined with, and resulting from, much ignorance concerning it, rank among the main causes why men continue estranged from Him—why they remain either in a state of listless unconcern in regard to the self-existent and Supreme Jehovah, incomparably the most interesting Object in the universe; or feel an aversion even to think of Him—a sure indication of disaffection towards Him. Such states of mind in regard to God do not result from absolute ignorance of him, for were he entirely unknown, he could not be the

object either of thought or feeling; but from incorrect and defective knowledge, floating in minds which neither desire nor value acquaintance with Him—minds whose state of feeling in regard to God coincides with what the Apostle Paul declares to have been the state of feeling among the heathen, in relation to Him—" they did not like to retain God in their knowledge." A similar state of mind, existing among professing Christians, in regard to their brethren who may differ from them, is one of the main sources of a schismatic spirit; ignorance in great measure of their real character, combined with incorrect and unfavourable notions concerning them. The evil influence of such a state of mind is greatly aggravated, when—as is frequently the case—there are mingled and combined with it misconceptions regarding the prime elements of Christian character—when certain specific views of some mysterious doctrines, or respecting ritual observances and church polity, are regarded as equally essential to communion with the church, if not to salvation, with faith, love, and obedience to the Divine commandments. When special views of doubtful matters are hoisted up to an undue importance, it is always to the disparagement of the essential elements of Christian character; an undue importance being attached to such views, and an undue measure of attention devoted to them, a corresponding measure of both must be withdrawn from " the weightier matters of the law." Besides, as the importance of these special views becomes enhanced in our estimation, our

estimate of the Christian attainments of our brethren who hold them not, or hold others inimical to them, must sink, and as it sinks, our love will rapidly decline. And when we come to regard special views or opinions of the kind under consideration as essential to salvation, then we cannot longer regard as Christians those who do not adopt them, and, consequently, brotherly love towards such must cease. Next to regarding these views as essential to salvation, is the regarding of them as essential to church communion; and, indeed, it appears to us a dangerous inconsistency to regard any thing as essential to the latter, which is not essential to the former; for those who regard views of the kind now under consideration as essential to church communion, will often be found, but reluctantly, and with much qualification, to concede that they are not essential to salvation. Thus ignorance and misconception respecting the prime elements of Christian character, tend greatly to produce and foster a schismatic spirit.

Misconception is the source of prejudice, which is just disaffection wilfully blind to all that is lovely or excellent in its objects, and wishing to continue so. Prejudice obstinately shuts its eyes against whatever bears in favour of its objects, but it directs them with the keenness of eagle-vision to the detection of their faults, and is forward to magnify these, and to regard and represent them in the most unfavourable light. It acts directly the reverse of that charity which "thinketh no evil," for it thinketh only evil of its objects—of that charity which "rejoiceth not

in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth," for it is gratified when those whom it repugnates fall into sin—of that charity which "endureth all things"—for it can endure nothing, but makes every thing a pretext for calumniation and abuse. Such a temper must be deeply schismatic; and if it is met by a corresponding temper in persons of opposing views, hatred will burst forth into strife with fearful fury.

What but the most serious misconceptions could make Christian brethren, who have never personally offended one another, to regard each other with aversion or with hatred?—brethren who bear the same image, are actuated by the same spirit, animated by the same hopes, and hastening to an eternal state in which—if they fall not short of the prize at which they aim—they shall stand for ever to each other in the closest relationship! Surely there must be something fearfully wrong, when such entertain aversion towards each other; and it much concerns all, who are conscious of being chargeable with allowing their minds to be thus affected, seriously to ponder those numerous and explicit declarations of Scripture, which exhibit love to the brethren as an essential element of Christian character. Let us be assured that it will not be at last sustained as an excuse for aversion towards our brethren, or for treating them harshly, that we laboured under misconceptions concerning their character, if the means of correcting these misconceptions were within our reach, while we did not avail ourselves of them. Ignorance on moral subjects, when not inevitable,

always involves guilt, and guilt proportioned to the importance of the knowledge not possessed, but which might have been obtained.

The other main source of a schismatic spirit which we mentioned was pride. "Only by pride," says the wise man, "cometh contention." A proud and self-conceited spirit makes a man to reason dogmatically, and to deliver unqualified opinions respecting obscure and doubtful matters; it renders him impatient of contradiction, and apt to be inflamed with anger; all which are characteristics of a schismatic temper of mind. Were it not for pride, and that schismatic spirit which it tends so much to generate and maintain, Christians might converse together freely on matters respecting which they differ, and might mutually communicate and receive instruction, without exciting or experiencing any unchristian or unpleasant feeling: for while each stated and illustrated his views with becoming humility and respect for the views of his brethren, there would be no contention for victory; but each would be not less anxious to have his own views of truth corrected and enlarged, than to contribute to correct and enlarge the views of others. And if one Christian should conceive another to be in error, even in serious error, it would not be by angry contention with him, or harsh and obstreperous condemnation of his opinions, that he would endeavour to reclaim him, knowing that "the wrath of man worketh not the

righteousness of God," but by stating distinctly what he conceives to be the truth, and by faithful remonstrance in the spirit of brotherly kindness.

The Pharisees of old "trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others." They stood aloof, with supercilious haughtiness, from those who belonged not to their sect. Swollen with sanctimonious pride, they looked down with contempt and detestation on "publicans and sinners;" yet our Lord declared that these—the basest of the people—should enter into the kingdom of heaven before them. In them pride appeared in its full development, and it made them pre-eminent schismatics. Well had it been for the church and the world, if the spirit by which they were distinguished had been confined to them.

The influence of pride, as well as that of ignorance, in producing a schismatic spirit, is prominently brought before Christians, by the Apostle Paul, in his First Epistle to Timothy. "If any man consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the doctrine which is according to godliness, he is *proud, knowing nothing*, but doating about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds."

It is an opinion very generally entertained, and grounded, we believe, on the caution given by Paul to Timothy in reference to the choice of bishops, that a novice should not be appointed to this re-

ponsible and most important office, "lest being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil;"—it is, we say, a prevalent opinion, that pride was the original sin of Satan, and those who joined with him in rebellion against the authority of Jehovah. If such was the case, it produced, so far as we know, the first schism in the universe —broke the unity, infringed on the happiness, and marred the beauty of God's creation.

Pride can subsist in us only amid deep ignorance —ignorance of our real character, attainments, and condition. Had we proper views of our weakness, dependence, and sinfulness, we would not feel the elation of self-complacency, nor the inflation of self-sufficiency. And not only is pride nourished by misconceptions concerning ourselves, but likewise by misconceptions concerning our brethren; under the influence of these we are led to despise our brethren, and that even when they may be in many respects vastly our superiors. A proud and haughty demeanour towards our brethren is a sure indication that we do not love them, for such a demeanour love will not permit; on the contrary, it prompts those who are actuated by it "in honour to prefer one another." It is not by high attainments in the more important parts of Christian character that men are inflated with pride, for pride is a feeling most repugnant to such attainments; as persons rise in them they increase in humility. It is always some extrinsic, or obscure, or unimportant matter respecting which persons imagine themselves more en-

lightened, or more privileged than others, that excites this feeling. But such pride, as well as other sorts of it, must result from very inadequate and partial views of the matter. When a person is exalted in self-complacency, because, as he is confident, he has attained to more correct and scriptural conceptions, respecting perhaps an emblematical rite, or some obscure question of church government and order, than many of his brethren, or because he enjoys above them some extrinsic distinction; and when he regards them as weak in the faith because they have not reached his attainments, or looks down on them as mean because they are not privileged like him: he seems to forget that, admitting his superiority over them in these things, still, whatever is more important in the principles of Christianity, in its spirit, and in its duties, is left for them to excel in; and it is far from being unlikely, that in many or all of these, the attainments of numbers of them may be greatly above his; for his elation, on account of his superiority over them in regard to the obscure and less important matters, is no slight indication that he has formed a very inadequate estimate of the relative value of those that are more momentous. Thus, while such a person may be fancying himself "rich, and increased with goods," he may be, as respects the most important features of the Christian spirit and character, "poor, and blind, and naked." It is always to be regarded as an indication that either individuals or communities are in a dangerous, if not a declining condition, in regard to spiritual character,

when they are more possessed with notions of their superiority over their brethren, than with a sense of their remoteness from the standard of perfection.

How inimical to the spirit manifested by Christ while he sojourned on earth is pride; and how hurtful, consequently, must it be to his cause and interest in the world. He was meek and lowly in heart; he patiently "endured the contradiction of sinners against himself." Though the "High and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity," he not only became man, but took the lowest station in life, that he might be able to sympathize with the outcasts—the very helots of the race; that he might "raise the poor out of the dust, and lift the needy from the dunghill." Though, as the mighty God, receiving the homage of the highest orders of created intelligences, he assumed no supercilious bearing towards the most wretched and despised of mankind; on the contrary, he healed their diseases, supplied their wants, and soothed their sorrows; and he invited and besought all to come to him, promising them relief and rest—"Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest; take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls." Reader, meditate on this Divine sentence—"Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls;" and think how much of the true philosophy of the human mind it embodies, and how much of utilitarian—of true utilitarian ethics. Those who have imbibed the meekness and lowli-

ness of Christ—who have really learned of him,—have rest from the stings and irritations of mortified vanity—rest from the corrosive gnawings of disappointed ambition—rest from the insatiable cravings of the lust of fame—and rest from the contentious wranglings of proud and self-sufficient spirits; and their souls are soothed and satisfied with the "joy of the Lord," for "with the lowly is his delight." How inimical, also, is pride to the spirit maintained by the apostles of Christ;—for example, Paul, the most successful preacher of the cross, though once a proud and self-sufficient Pharisee, after he had become a disciple of him who was "meek and lowly," characterized himself as "less than the least of all saints;" and "became all things to all men, that by all means he might save some."

Too high an estimate, then, of ourselves, conjoined with a correspondingly disparaging estimate of our brethren, is one of the main sources of schism. Did each, agreeably to the injunctions of the Holy Spirit, esteem others better than himself; did all "in honour prefer one another," schism could find no place among the disciples of Christ.

It is only in a virtually, if not explicitly assumed infallibility, that a schismatical and dogmatic spirit attains its full development. The haughty dogmatist denounces and condemns all who differ from him, with as much boldness as if he held a Divine commission to do so. Like the flaming sword which guarded the entrance to paradise, after its forfeiture by man, he turns every way to smite all who presume

to question his opinions. The tone in which his decisions are issued might lead you to suppose that he occupied the throne of infallible judgment—that he stood in the very focus of universal light, and not that he was only a creature of yesterday, paralyzed in all his powers by sin, and confined to a dim and secluded corner of creation. The vehemence with which the dogmatist asserts his opinions is generally in the inverse ratio of the evidence on which they rest, and the adverse blasts of contradiction only lash him into greater fury; he would not admit the shadow of a doubt about the matter, not he; truth is but one, and he has it pure and entire, and they must be wilfully blind who see not that it is so. The dogmatist, though he may change his opinions, does not at all alter his temper or tone; he never seems to reflect, that as his judgment had erred already, it is quite possible it may do so again. From the flaming centre of one party, he passes rapidly to that of another, and thence vehemently abuses and condemns those among whom he had formerly ranked as a leader, and denounces as damnable heresy what he had formerly regarded as essential elements of saving knowledge. And if the dogmatist assumes infallibility to himself, he does so with still greater confidence on behalf of his church; his is the only true church; from amid the ruins and rubbish of the dark ages, she started forth complete at once—a paragon of excellence—" the perfection of beauty:" and while all others have been wandering amid the mists of ignorance, and " stumbling

on the dark mountains" of error, she has pursued her course along the illuminated line of rectitude and truth.

Moreover, he in whom the schismatic spirit is fully developed is always a spiritual despot; and if he wants the power of coercing and punishing in this world those who differ from him, who adopt not his views, and submit not to his dictation, he takes ample revenge, by forestalling their doom in the next. The clear import of his language to each of such is, "You must think as I think, feel as I feel, and act as I act; else you are a heretic, and your doom shall be endless perdition." Now, if the judgment of such a person were really infallible, and if his knowledge embraced universal truth, he would be entitled to speak with unhesitating confidence and unyielding decision; though, were such the case, we have reason to think his theological dictatorship would be exercised in a milder manner. But when we reflect on the place which man occupies in the universe, and especially on his moral character, it is, indeed, a melancholy spectacle to behold a creature so weak and sinful usurping the high functions of Jehovah—attempting to forestal the awards of final judgment: and by doing so, presumptuously violating the most explicit Divine commandments, such as, "Judge not, that ye be not judged;" and, "Why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother?" and coming under imminent peril of the most fearful condemnation, for this is the declaration of "the faithful and true

Witness"—"With what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again."

If the Apostle of the Gentiles characterized the Corinthians as "carnal," and as "babes in Christ," because of their divisions, if on account of these he regarded the spiritual life in them as sickly and feeble, surely the man who thinks that his is the only true church must be indeed a babe in Christ, weak and defective in spiritual attainments, as is in geographical knowledge the child, who, having neither seen nor heard of other lands, fancies all the world is comprehended within the circuit of those hills which he sees from his father's dwelling.

SECTION III.

PROXIMATE CAUSES OF SCHISM.

HAVING found that disaffection is the essential principle of a schismatic spirit, and that misconception and pride are its chief sources; we are now to endeavour to trace out and describe the principal proximate causes of schism—those courses of conduct which operate directly in producing it.

Of these, the first we name is the lust of spiritual domination, as developed in the usurpation of the legislative function in the church. The power entrusted to church rulers is only administrative and executive. They may recommend measures or observances as expedient or salutary, but they are not authorized nor allowed to enforce any thing that cannot be shown to be a law of Christ. He is the only lawgiver to the church. Christians have but one "Master, even Christ, and all they are brethren." The institutes which the apostles "delivered" to the churches, were those which they had "received of the Lord," and they disclaimed all lord-

ship or dominion over the faith of their brethren. Peter exhorts the elders among those to whom he wrote—designating himself an elder too—to "feed the flock of God" which was among them, "taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock."—"Not," says Paul to the Corinthians, when to spare them he had postponed his intended visit, "not that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy." Moreover, we find the same apostle carefully distinguishing between matters respecting which he had received commandment of the Lord, and matters respecting which he had not; in cases of the latter sort he assumed no authority, he only gave his advice.* The injunctions which "the apostles and elders, with the whole church" at Jerusalem, sent to their Gentile brethren in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia, the inspired record informs us, were such as "seemed good to the Holy Spirit."

The lust of domination displayed itself frequently among the disciples of our Lord, and always when it appeared, manifested its schismatic tendency. We read of contentions and strifes among them, which should be the greatest. And when the mother of Zebedee's children desired of Christ, that he would "grant to them to sit the one on his right hand, and the other on his left, in his kingdom," "the ten," we are informed, "were moved with indignation." From

* See 1 Cor. Chap. vii.

this ambitious and presumptuous request, our Lord took occasion strictly to prohibit the assumption of authority by any of his followers over the rest—"Ye know that the princes of the nations domineer over them, and the great exercise their authority upon them.* But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant." As this could not at all imply that there were to be no official distinctions, and no official authority, in the Church of Christ, since we are expressly informed, that he "gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers," it must have been intended to inhibit any from assuming the power of enforcing on their brethren obedience to what they might see meet to dictate, that being the kind of dominion which the princes of the Gentiles exercised over their subjects. The direct tendency of the assumption and exercise of legislative power in the church, either by its rulers or by others, is to produce schism: for not only those are thrust out who conscientiously object to those things, which men in the exercise of such power may enjoin, but those also who regard the assumption of such power as an infringement of Christian liberty, not to be submitted to consistently with fidelity to Christ. But they are not to be regarded as the schismatics who are thus compelled to withdraw; but those who, by assuming a power which belongs not to them, force them out, they are

* Matth. xx. 25. Campbell's Translation.

the schismatics. Paul, though most anxious and careful to maintain Christian unity, yet—as we have seen in the preceding part of this work—with emphatic decision refused to submit to human impositions,* and enjoined others to do so. "As many," says he to the Galatians, "as desire to make a fair show in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised. . . . . Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, and be not entangled again in the yoke of bondage." Yet observe how carefully he guards against the abuse of this Christian freedom:—"Brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another." The liberty wherewith Christ makes his people free is no liberty to sin, far from it; it is only liberty to pursue the course which, on proper consideration, they are persuaded is right. Titus was enjoined by Paul to rebuke the Cretans sharply, on account of evils which they allowed to adhere to their character, and that they might "be sound in the faith, and not give heed to Jewish fables and *commandments of men, which turn away from the truth.*" To the saints of Colosse the same apostle writes, "Let no man judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holiday, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days. . . . . If ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, ... after the doctrines and command-

* See pp. 26 and 32.

ments of men ?" What more explicit exemption from human authority in religious matters could be conceived ? If the church be not the home of spiritual liberty, it is not because ample means and precautions have not been adopted by her glorious Head to secure its perpetual enjoyment there. Spiritual despotism has assuredly obtained no countenance from him, but every thing the reverse. He crushed in the germ the lust of domination in his disciples, he denounced with unwonted severity the scribes and Pharisees, "who bound heavy burdens, and grievous to be borne, and laid them on men's shoulders; while they themselves would not move them with one of their fingers." And his beloved disciple, the Apostle John, a man remarkably assimilated in character to his Lord, condemned, in terms such as he used on no other occasion, one who domineered over his brethren in the church: "I wrote unto the church," says he in his Epistle to Gaius, "but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doth, prating against us with malicious words;" and we find that the lust of power made this same person a virulent schismatic,—"neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church."

Another proximate cause of schism, and one that has been productive of it to a great extent, is the adherence of Christians to human leaders—the adop-

tion of Christianity not simply as it is to be found in the Scriptures, in its native purity; but in one or other of the forms into which it has been moulded by man. These forms having generally been conceived far more in the spirit of antagonism than of accommodation—constructors of systems of theology, having been for the most part much more fond to differ than to agree, not unfrequently proceeding the length of denying to each other the character of Christians, adherence to such leaders, and adoption of their systems, must be directly productive of schism. Many of the injunctions of Christ have been sadly disregarded by his followers, but, perhaps, none more than these—"Assume not the title of Rabbi, for ye have only one teacher, the Messiah; and style no man upon the earth your father, for he alone is your Father who is in heaven, and all ye are brethren. Neither assume the title of leaders, for ye have only one leader, the Messiah."* Devotedness to a religious leader not unfrequently has a powerful influence on persons, in their adoption of a creed. Some theologian or polemic raised to distinction by his talents, his eccentricities, or the peculiar circumstances in which he may have been placed, draws to him the special homage of a class or denomination of religionists, as being the promulgator of their peculiar views, or the originator of their distinguishing observances. Such a state of feeling towards any ecclesiastical

* Matth. xxiii. 8-10. Campbell's Translation.

leader generates in the mind a strong prepossession in favour of any dogma, which is known to have been held by him, and a corresponding prejudice against any one which he is known to have rejected; and by a process in which the mind is unhappily but too facile, such predilections and prejudices soon come to be felt quite as much towards those who entertain particular theological or ecclesiastical opinions, or who reject them, respectively, as in regard to the opinions themselves. And all this frequently takes place, while there is little or no examination of Scripture, unless it be in search of proof for opinions previously adopted, and adopted for other reasons, than because they are in harmony with what it affirms or enjoins.

We have already endeavoured to trace the undue homage often yielded to the founders of religious sects to the same source as the worship of false gods; and scarcely have the heathen been more prone to the one evil than professing Christians have been to the other. Scarcely were the primitive churches organized, when this as well as the other factious propensities of our fallen nature began to show themselves among their members. The Jews, when Christ appeared among them, were inflated with the pride of privileged descent. By having Abraham to their father, they conceived themselves immeasurably elevated above every other people; and, in conjunction with this, they gloried in having a leader of peerless renown, even Moses their lawgiver, in whom they trusted. Many of those of "the seed of Abraham"

who embraced the religion of Christ, carried a large portion of this their distinctive spirit with them into the church, as is clearly evinced by their recorded conduct. True it is that the intention and tendency of Christianity was to break down the middle wall of partition between the Jews and Gentiles, and "of twain to make one, so making peace;" but many of those who adopted it received its true spirit but very partially into their hearts. They still clung with a dangerous fondness to the institutes of Moses, and retained much of their antipathy to the uncircumcised, even in the church; and the schismatic or sectarian tendency of the spirit which actuated them, displayed itself in the great reluctance which they manifested to acknowledge Gentile converts as brethren, unless they would observe the rites prescribed in the law delivered to them by Moses.

But the most distinct and by far the most prominent exemplification of the evil in question, recorded in the New Testament as having appeared in the primitive churches, is furnished by the church at Corinth. The case is thus stated by the apostle in his First Epistle to that church: "It hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them who are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now, this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ." They had the presumption to make even Christ himself the head of a party along with his ministers. The absurdity as well as the impiety of their conduct is strikingly exhibited

in the remonstrances which follow—"Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?* . . . Who is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So, then, neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. . . . Therefore let no man glory in men." Has this solemn and explicit condemnation of sectarian adherence to men—of adherence to them as guides of faith—had its proper influence on the church? Have her members been deterred from such adherence by the exhibition the apostle has given of its pernicious tendencies? Alas! far from it. The church has continued to act for the most part as if in utter disregard of these, and her members remain to this day ranged under human leaders, often zealous in defence of their opinions, rather than for the truth as it is in Jesus; and in consequence of this, along with other causes, schism fearfully prevails.

The third cause which we shall mention as directly productive of schism is, the admission into the church, and the retention in it, of unbelievers, and the unholy. We have in the first part of this Essay adverted to the connection subsisting between the scriptural purity and the unity of the church. And

* For the rest, see 1 Cor. i. from ver. 14 to the end, and chapters ii. and iii., and chapter iv. 1—7.

as we have found that real Christian unity is a unity in Christ of those who love him, it cannot subsist between such and his enemies; for that were indeed a "communion of light with darkness—concord of Christ with Belial." The admission into the church, therefore, of those who show by their conduct that they are estranged from Christ, must be subversive of her real unity. Christians can have no interchange of brotherly love—no communion of heart—with those whom they perceive to be enemies to their Lord; or, if they shall love these with other than a love of pity—if they shall come into communion of spirit with them, it can only be by losing the enjoyment of the love of their Redeemer—by relinquishing communion with him; a spiritual condition which, if continued in, must prove fatal. Those that join themselves to the world shall share in its woes. They only who take their journey through the wilderness with the people of God shall enjoy with them the land of promise. Either, then, worldly and wicked men, when they find a place in the church, must stand apart by themselves,—a strange and isolated anomaly there; or, they must attract the weak and wavering—drawing these into an assimilation of character with themselves, in which case, their schismatic influence will be fearfully inimical to the eternal interests of those on whom it operates. Now, the former supposition can never be verified. The existence of the unholy, as an entirely isolated class in the church, is not possible. When they are in her at all there must at least be external commu-

nion between them and the holy,—communion even in the sacred commemoration of the Saviour's dying love. The true state of the case then must be in accordance with the latter supposition, and in fact it is ever found to be so. In our times the state of the Christian community is such—the state even of the majority of those who profess something more than a mere listless assent to the truth of Christianity,—that one of these conclusions is forced upon us,—either the greater part of Christians are become so like the world, that the line of separation between them and it is nearly obliterated, or the number of the saved is small indeed;—either multitudes of Christians drag on a fruitless, comfortless, sickly, and in many cases declining spiritual existence, the little that remains "ready to die," or they have only a name to live while they are dead.—Which shall we say? May the author and every reader, in endeavouring to find a satisfactory answer to this momentous question, be inclined and enabled to make his own heart and character the first subjects of scrutiny! This deplorable state of things is mainly to be attributed to the presence of worldly and wicked men in the church, mingled there with its spiritual members, and operating like leaven upon them—assimilating many of these in character to themselves, and consequently drawing off those who are so assimilated from their brethren who remain uncontaminated.

Moreover, when worldly men are invested with authority in the church, they are ever doing violence

to the inner and higher principles of the spiritual economy. As they comprehend not its delicate mechanism, they cannot touch it without producing derangement. As they are not themselves influenced by the motives peculiar to vital Christianity, they cannot apprehend their force. As in their own hearts they do not experience love to God, and by consequence recognise not this love as the essential principle of all true and acceptable obedience, and can therefore rise no higher than the spiritless skeleton of detailed law; so in the church—seeing they are insusceptible of that love to the brethren which is the only bond of true Christian unity, that being an emotive principle peculiar to the regenerate,—they can trust to nothing for guarding her portals or holding her members together but legal tests and bonds, notwithstanding that the history of the church in all ages in which these have been applied, shows that they have ever tended greatly to produce division. The church, according to the constitution she received from her Head, being a spiritual society, a "kingdom not of this world," actuated and controlled by principles and laws which the men of the world do not comprehend, and therefore cannot act on nor administer agreeably to their proper spirit, must be disorganised by the investment of such men with ecclesiastical powers. In their official capacity they cannot move a step but they tear in pieces or displace some of her moving springs, which are of too ethereal a texture to be apprehended by the grossness of their vision. And when they proceed

to subject her (as they have often done) to the coercive apparatus of worldly law, they make fearful havoc—dislocating and tearing the body of Christ, till, instead of attracting the admiration of all beholders, by its fair proportions and noble mien, it becomes repulsive and loathsome to all mankind. In regard to the fearful evils produced by worldly men finding place and power in the church, well may Christians echo the doleful tones of the Psalmist's harp, when he sung of the woes which the uncircumcised had brought on Israel, her type: "O God, the heathen have entered thine heritage, thy holy temple have they defiled, they have laid Jerusalem on heaps. The dead bodies of thy servants they have cast forth to be meat unto the fowls of heaven, the flesh of thy saints unto the beasts of the earth. Their blood have they shed like water round about Jerusalem; and there was none to bury them. We are become a reproach to our neighbours, a scorn and derision to them that are round about us."

The fourth and last proximate cause of schism to which we shall advert is, the use of acrimonious and satiric language in religious and ecclesiastical discussions. Christians are commanded not only to put away "all wrath, and anger, and malice," but also all "bitterness, and clamour, and evil-speaking." They are enjoined not to render "railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing;" ever directed and fortified by the example of Christ—"who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, threatened

not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." Christians are to "maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace," by "speaking the truth in love,"—not in a listless and unfeeling manner, but with the animation of benevolence. Animation, let it be observed, springs from two widely different sources,—from love and its concomitant and kindred feelings, and from hatred and the feelings which spring from or are related to it;—the former is the right source of the Christian's animation. His must be a zeal burning in love, else it cannot be a zeal lighted up by fire from heaven. The animation which springs from the malignant passions is essentially repulsive; but the animation produced by the benign emotions is attractive in its nature, drawing often the more powerfully the higher that it rises. Such was the animation of Christ; his words drew life and energy from the springs of benignity. Such was that of his apostles. "The joy of the Lord was their strength." Knowing that "the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God," the tenor of their language was—"We beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ." Or, if they felt themselves compelled to use the language of reproof, it ever sprung from, and was attempered by love.—"O foolish Galatians! who hath bewitched you that ye should not obey the truth?"—"My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you, I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice, for I stand in doubt of you."—"My

brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons; for if there come into your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment, and ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, ... are ye not partial, and become judges of evil thoughts? Hearken, my beloved brethren, hath not God chosen the poor in this world . . . ? But ye have despised the poor." Such was the tone in which the apostles of our Lord administered reproof—in the spirit of tender and ardent love. Bitter language is always the result of disaffection—hatred it is which whets its edge; and as it springs from disaffection, so it tends to excite it in those on whom it bears. These it infects with its repellent properties; and in minds at all irascible kindles up the fires of anger, and is often productive of the direst divisions and strifes.

The Apostle of the Gentiles, in writing to Timothy, represents railing as one of those evils indulged in by men of corrupt minds, and as a concomitant of envy and strife—a prominent feature in the character of those from whom it is the duty of Christians to withdraw themselves: from which we are to learn, that indulgence in this practice is incompatible with union to Christ, and tends directly to destroy the unity of his people. Though satiric language may not always result from disaffection or hatred towards those who are its objects, yet, when these are our brethren, it indicates a state of feeling towards them very different from that which Chris-

tianity requires, and which the mind, under its proper influence, will cherish. And its direct tendency is to separate hearts; for nothing tends more to irritate a person than to make his opinions or practices the subjects of ridicule—to represent them in such a manner as that others may treat them with derision. Reproof, even though severe, may proceed from love—yea, may be a proof of it; but to make a person the subject of ridicule, is always a proof of, at least, indifference towards him. We are not to be understood as attributing these noxious qualities and tendencies to innocent pleasantry—such pleasantry as plays in joy and love—for that is often an indication and proof of the confidence of friendship. We refer only to language more or less tinctured with bitterness or contempt.

That is an instructive glimpse of the invisible world, permitted us by Jude, when he says—speaking of those who despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities—that "Michael, the archangel, when contending with the devil, (he disputed about the body of Moses,) durst not bring a railing accusation against him, but said, The Lord rebuke thee." Michael, one of the heads of the heavenly hierarchy—pure and exalted—durst not bring an accusation of this sort against Satan—malignant and debased—the originator of rebellion against the moral government of God. How then dare a man—fallen, frail, and of yesterday, worthy of perdition, and owing all his hopes of escape from it to the sovereign mercy of God—bring such an accusation against his brother, sharer of the

same nature, and interested in the same salvation? A railing accusation seems to be strictly prohibited among the children of the Highest, seeing an archangel durst not bring it against even the devil. The Apostle Peter, in that part of his Second Epistle (chap. ii.) with which so large a portion of the Epistle of Jude is so remarkably coincident, uses language of similar import when speaking of false teachers, (concerning whom he warned his brethren,) that "walk after the flesh, in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government," he says, "They are not afraid to speak evil of dignities; whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not a railing accusation against them before the Lord." How different, alas! from the conduct of angels, in that respect, is that of many who profess to be disciples of the tender and compassionate Redeemer—of those who ought to be imitators of him!

Christ himself plainly declares to us, that by applying contemptuous or abusive names to our brethren, we bring ourselves into fearful peril. "Whosoever is angry with his brother unjustly, shall be obnoxious to the judges; whosoever shall call him fool, shall be obnoxious to the council; but whosoever shall call him miscreant, shall be obnoxious to hell fire."* How little do numbers of Christian professors appear impressed or influenced by this awful declaration!

No one who would wish to see Christians all united by the sanatory influence of brotherly love,

* Matth. v. 22. Campbell's Translation.

can contemplate, without deep sorrow, the spirit in which controversies between the members of different religious communities are generally conducted. In the acrimony and even malignity with which they often attack each other, in the coarse satire and mean personalities in which they indulge, in the pitiful advantages which they take, and in the manifest delight with which each holds up to view the mistakes and faults of his antagonist, is displayed a spirit directly opposed to the distinctive spirit of Christianity—a spirit fearfully schismatic—a spirit which the Master they profess to serve has most emphatically condemned.*

There are many other things of a less prominent nature, that tend directly to produce schism, but which we cannot now particularise. Every thing in our character or conduct, not required by the Divine Law, and which proves offensive to our brethren, is of this nature, and should be carefully avoided and guarded against by all the disciples of Christ. "Give no offence neither to the Jews nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God," is the admirable rule delivered by the Apostle Paul to the Christians at Corinth; a rule which he himself was pre-eminently careful to observe—"Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved."

* This, and one or two other paragraphs towards the end of this Treatise, are introduced, with some modification, from the article on "Christian Union," in "Hours of Thought."

SECTION IV.

SCHISM CONSIDERED AS THE RESULT OF SATANIC AGENCY.

COMPLAINTS have of late been heard from various quarters, and not without reason, that the church, in our times, has but very inadequately apprehended the extent and importance of spiritual agency, whether good or evil. The prevalence and triumphs of a mechanical philosophy, combined, by many of those who have distinguished themselves in that department of science, with materializing speculations, have contributed to cause the spiritual economy to be overlooked, and to generate a prejudice against it. In many of the halls of science spiritual agency and influence have been treated with derision, not only without any proper evidence against them, but in contempt of the strongest evidence in their favour—a proceeding quite as repugnant to the spirit of true philosophy, as the conduct of the credulous multitude, who receive as authentic every idle and marvellous legend.

The human mind, when driven in from one ex-

treme, seldom settles on the line of truth, but rushes on towards the opposite one. So it has been in the case we are now considering. When the light of modern science began to spread over Europe, ignorance and superstition held an almost unbroken dominion over the minds of the people. Men were kept under continual apprehension, and incessantly disturbed and thwarted in their ordinary affairs, by the tyrannous belief, that innumerable animals, objects without life even, and portions of time, were possessed of occult powers, and exerted occult influences of the most potent character; and that there existed an ill-defined, but fearful collusion between not a few of the human race and malignant spirits —a collusion pregnant with the most appalling powers. They were frequently startled and alarmed by what they conceived to be voices and visions, premonitory of misfortune or death, and by strange apparitions of the shades of the departed. All nature was regarded by them as densely peopled by various subtle orders of beings, which, though generally incognizable, yet, did not unfrequently manifest themselves to the senses of men. The revelation from heaven, which is adapted to dispel all delusions respecting the spiritual economy, and which supplies the means of acquiring correct notions concerning it, was then shut up from sight; and the religion of Christ—that Divine specific for the ignorance and woes of man, which that revelation developes and embodies—was presented to them in a most debased and perverted form—shorn of its

heavenly beauty and attractiveness, and buried beneath a mass of tinsel and mummery. Such was the mental condition of the nations of Europe when the splendid scientific discoveries of modern times commenced; and, with the exception of the incipient improvement effected by the Reformation, such was the state of Christianity. As these discoveries continued to extend and increase, many, dazzled by the splendours of the material universe, which then burst on their view, turned from the spiritual economy—which appeared involved in obscurity, and crowded with absurdities on its very front—with unconcealed disgust and contempt; despising the Guide which would have conducted them—clear of all the hideous and fantastic monstrosities with which superstition had replenished it—into the midst of its incomparable, though recondite wonders. In the eighteenth century, Christianity—which embodies the highest vindication and proof of the immense superiority of the spiritual over the material universe—was rejected by the majority of scientific men, or only its lifeless skeleton was retained, dispossessed of all that constitutes its peculiar glory, and supplies its effective power. The spirit of the leaders in science spread with their works, and with the knowledge of their discoveries, and affected many who did not embrace all their opinions, so that spiritual agency in terrene affairs, and spiritual influence on the minds of men, came into discredit and contempt, or faded from the view in neglect. From the epidemic temper of

the times in regard to spiritual agency and influence, the church has by no means escaped infection. Always open to exterior influences, she is peculiarly so to such as come through the medium of the prevalent philosophy, the greater part of her teachers being in some measure initiated in that. Not only have almost all the Protestant churches on the continent of Europe been drawn aside into fatal heresy by the infidel philosophy which sprung up in such fell luxuriance around them; but even those sections of the Christian community which have mainly retained "the faith once delivered to the saints," have unworthily—though in a great degree unconsciously—succumbed to the prevalent spirit of the times, and that especially in reference to Satanic agency; for in regard to that agency, there is reason to fear, that where it has still been nominally recognized, it has not at all been apprehended vividly as that tremendous evil, besetting and assailing us at all times, and on every hand, depicted in Scripture in such fearful colours. Symptoms, however, of a favourable reaction are, we trust, beginning to manifest themselves. Some of the most gifted intellects of our times have been applying their energies, and lending their influence, to rescue the spiritual economy from the neglect and contempt into which it had been brought by a purblind philosophy; and, besides, we need hardly fear that such contempt and neglect can be of long continuance, as they do violence to the highest principles of human nature; for an impression of the existence of invisible or

spiritual power is an original instinct of the human soul. Soon, therefore, we trust philosophy will retire into her proper sphere, and—chastened and corrected in spirit—will learn to acknowledge, that it becomes not her to affirm or deny any thing respecting the laws and operations of spiritual agency, unless on its own proper and peculiar evidence.

When we characterize schism as the result of Satanic agency, or when we pronounce Satan the originator of schism, we are not to be regarded as wishing to hold or affirm, that those who are the subjects of Satanic agency, directed to the end in question, suffer any infringement of their proper liberty of choice, or that the guilt of men is extenuated because they become schismatics, at the suggestion or instigation of the devil. The freedom of man is not infringed by the suggestion of any thought or motive, or the excitation of any feeling in the mind by spiritual agency, else it would be infringed likewise by the language in which one individual of the species communicates his ideas or impressions to another, for that language suggests thought, brings motives to bear on the mind, and excites feeling. In these two cases it is only the mode of operation that is different—the effects are the same. By both kinds of agency thoughts are suggested to the mind, motives are applied to it, and feelings are excited in it. And influences of whatever kind, thus operating on the mind, are so far from involving any infringement of liberty, that the being subjected to some such in-

fluences is an essential element of a state of trial, without which, liberty could not be exercised. It is not in any direct control over the origination of his thoughts or feelings that the liberty of man consists, but in the power he possesses to direct, or restrain, or suppress these according to his will. A power of which, if duly exercised, no agency, spiritual or corporeal, can deprive him. We can neither prevent beings of our own order, nor spiritual beings, from suggesting thoughts to our minds, nor from exciting feelings within us; but if the thoughts so suggested be such as we should not entertain, we can turn our minds away from them, and if the feelings thus excited be evil, we can suppress them; and if we are incited to improper conduct by such thoughts or feelings, from such conduct we have power to refrain. But owing to the weakness and corruption of his nature, man often fails rightly to exercise this power, and the evil bias of his own heart aiding his spiritual foes, he falls before them.

We are entirely ignorant of the mode in which spiritual beings operate on the human mind. How it is that they communicate thoughts to it, or excite feelings in it, we know not. But our ignorance in this respect cannot at all affect the fact that spiritual beings do operate on the minds of men, for we are equally ignorant of the modes in which many agents in the material world operate, of the existence and operation of which we have nevertheless indubitable evidence. The doctrine that spiritual agents, both good and evil, operate on the human mind, rests on

the broad basis of numerous and explicit declarations of Scripture, a basis which every one who acknowledges the divine authority of the Bible will regard as a sure one—and in such a case as this, as indeed the only sure one.

Satan by his rebellion rent the unity of God's intelligent creation. He—we have reason to believe—was the originator of schism in the moral universe; and it has been his constant aim to extend and increase it. He tempted man to sin—to rend himself from God, and become attached to him, thus adding earth to the dominion of hell. And when the Eternal Word became incarnate to destroy his works—to despoil him of his prey—and to reunite man to God, he, with inconceivable audacity, in the usurped capacity of proprietor of the world, presented his allurements to Him—offering him all the kingdoms of the earth, and the glory of them, if He would acknowledge his supremacy—if He would fall down and worship him. What recorded attempt in the annals of the universe is there which exhibits such presumptuous daring as this?—an attempt to produce a schism even in the Divine essence! What shall be too desperate for such a being to try?

But having been in this enterprise signally foiled, he instigated Judas to betray the Saviour into the hands of his enemies, hoping thus, no doubt, to defeat his merciful intentions towards man. But this, and all his other attempts against the Son of God, not only failed of their intended end, but were

converted by him into means and instruments of complete success and triumph. On the cross—to bring him to which, Satan had put in exercise all his malignant ingenuity—on the cross "he spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them on it." He triumphed there as the representative of all his people, and made victory sure to every one who should adhere to him. But it does not appear that his victory over Satan was of such a nature as directly and immediately to deprive him of any of his power or influence over men, if we except those united to Christ as his peculiar people. The world appears as much under the influence of the "wicked one," and exhibits as much of his spirit, as before. Messiah, as "the Captain of our salvation," did not chain Satan and consign him to the bottomless pit ere he left our world; for we read in Scripture of him afterwards perambulating the earth, subtile, fierce, and furious, as before,—"transformed into an angel of light"—deceiving the nations—"as a roaring lion, walking about seeking whom he may devour." Men can successfully contend with him—can free themselves from his tyranny—only by ranging themselves under Christ. He alone can enable them to gain the victory over Satan. And mankind, in the mass, can be delivered from the spiritual bondage in which they are held by him only by renewing their allegiance to heaven. Christ has brought Satan under the power of all his servants, and is ever ready to enable them to place their feet upon his

neck. "I give you power to tread on serpents and scorpions."—"The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." Christ had him already completely in his power, but he would not bruise him but under the feet of his people; through them he would put forth the energy which should extinguish his influence, and cause him to flee as a fugitive from the seat of his usurped dominion. He is to be subdued, not only on the ground on which he gained his insidious triumph, but by the very beings whom he deceived and degraded. Christ could, no doubt, with a glance of his eye have smitten him down into the lowest gulf of perdition, and rivetted him there for ever, but the order of the moral economy requires another mode of proceeding. Man is engaged as an agent in this part of his salvation, as well as in every other in which he can be engaged. Invested in heavenly panoply, he is set to combat principalities and powers, and assured of victory if he put all his armour on, and rightly use his weapons. The injunction of the Spirit of Christ to his people is, "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore, take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of

righteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints."—"Be vigilant," is the inspired commandment delivered by another apostle, "because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour: whom resist stedfast in the faith." Little, we fear, are Christians, generally, impressed with the perilousness of their situation, as continually exposed to the subtile or furious attacks of such an enemy, with such coadjutors. Little, we fear, are they alive to the functions of their high calling as soldiers of the cross, engaged in a warfare against the enemies of God, admitting of neither truce nor parley until victory be gained, until the world be delivered from under Satanic dominion.

Heretics—who are the elder brethren of schismatics—are declared to be emissaries of Satan. Those who preached another gospel to the Corinthians than the gospel of Christ, are characterized as "false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ." And it is declared to be nowise strange that they should thus act, when the conduct is considered of him whom

they serve and follow; "for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed into the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works."

The Apostle James, in depicting the evils of an ungoverned tongue, referring to its pernicious aptitude for kindling up the fires of anger, says that "it setteth on fire the course of nature, and it is set on fire of hell." And bitter envying and strife among Christian brethren he characterizes not only as "earthly" and "sensual," but also as "devilish;" "for," says he, "where envying and strife are, there is confusion and every evil work." The church in which these abound bears the likeness of hell. Its members, actuated by a Satanic spirit, instead of diffusing around them the savour of the Redeemer's name, subserve the ends of the enemy of God and man.

Many of the evils which subsisted in the seven churches of Asia, or which threatened them, are represented by the Spirit as directly connected with the agency of Satan. The blasphemous troublers of the churches of Smyrna and Philadelphia, who pretended to be Jews, and were not, are represented as belonging to "the synagogue of Satan." The constancy of the church in Pergamos receives the higher commendation, because it was maintained even in the place which is described as "Satan's seat."

Misconceptions, occasioned by ignorance, we have found to be one of the main sources of a schismatic

spirit, and all the power of Satan and his coadjutors is put in requisition in order to hold men in ignorance;—he and they are characterized as "the rulers of the darkness of this world."

The coming of "the man of sin"—the arch-schismatic—is described as being "after the working of Satan, with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish, because they received not the *love* of the truth, that their souls might be saved."

The "beast" which John in apocalyptic vision beheld "rise up out of the sea," is represented as receiving from "the dragon" "his power, and his seat, and great authority." He acts as the viceroy of Satan in the church, blaspheming God, and oppressing and destroying his people. "He opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven; and it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them."

The "scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy," on which sat the "woman arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand, full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication;" upon whose "forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH;" whom the apostle saw "drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus:"—The beast that carried this horrid person-

age, it was foretold, should "ascend out of the bottomless pit."

Thus, all the greatest evils under which the church has suffered—the evils which have distracted, disfigured, torn, and overwhelmed her, are exhibited to us in Scripture as resulting from Satanic agency. The ramifications of that agency are represented as pervading every section of the church, and its operations as ever tending to pervert and debase her principles and institutions,—as reaching all her members, ever tending to weaken and supplant the elements of the spiritual life within them—those elements which bind them together—and to fill them with ambition, envy, hatred, and all repulsive passions. Such are the fearful representations given in Scripture of that Satanic agency, to which the church in all her members is continually exposed, and which has brought upon her such appalling evils.

We may conceive Satan to have beheld the erection of the Christian church with the utmost alarm and consternation, perceiving that if it retained its unity, its purity, and its expansive energy, he must soon be deprived of his power over the world. He saw that the church wielded a power which no existent form of evil could long withstand. And unless it could itself be transmuted into an instrument of evil, he perceived that all hope of successfully opposing its progress was vain. He therefore conceived the fearful and daring project of converting

the church into an engine of hell, wrought by agents of his own, under his special direction and control. —And he succeeded!—Succeeded in transforming that noble product of Divine wisdom and grace, fitted and destined under the conduct of its Author to regenerate the world, into an engine possessed of a most skilful and fatal adaptation for the destruction of whatever is good and fair;—fitted with astonishing ingenuity to crush virtue, to extinguish piety, to inveigle men in a double slavery, to lead them on in unsuspecting ignorance, and amid meretricious decorations—to hell. He succeeded by fomenting evil passions and propensities in the members of the church, and especially by inflaming her rulers with jealousy, envy, and hatred towards one another, filling them with pride and the lust of domination; by insinuating into her innumerable forms and phases of dangerous and heretical speculations, all pregnant with schismatic influence; by drawing off one portion of her members into the inaction of the monastic seclusions, by tempting the rest to infidelity to their Master, by the riches and splendours of the world, by leading the indolent recluses to vilify the indispensable connections of society, and the necessary business of life, and thus to foment a growing disaffection between them and those who adhered to the active world; by enlisting the sword of civil power, now on the side of one faction, and then of another —till, on the billows of turbulence and confusion, his own representative and delegate was wafted up to the throne of absolute dominion over the largest

portion of the church—to an eminence "above all that is called God, or that is worshipped;" and the other part was either sunk into the weakness and torpor of senility, or consigned to the destroying sword of Mohammed; and the pure and saving light of Christianity—the last and brightest hope of a miserable world seemed just about to be extinguished for ever.

But in mercy to our race, and for the glory of his name, God did not suffer such a dread catastrophe to occur. He permitted not the light of Christianity to be entirely put out, even in the ages of its deepest obscurity; and after a long millennium, through which it had appeared only in the faintest glimmerings, it was at length partially resuscitated, and sent its beams again over a portion of the nations. Yet Satan still retained a large measure of power even over the renovated sections of the church. By the most fearful schisms they were rent entirely from each other; as if thus the prince of evil had taken ample revenge on the Reformed communities, for breaking in on the darkness of his long established dominion. And for all the changes that have passed over the church and the world, during three hundred years, crowded with strange and portentous events; the Protestant churches continue to this day almost unabatedly schismatic. Christians, with lamentably few exceptions, continue ingloriously to succumb to infernal dominion, yea, often, alas! adopt the insignia and the weapons of the enemy of their Lord. Satan has not yet been

bruised beneath the feet of the saints. Far from holding him ready to be bound by the angel that is to descend from heaven, chain in hand, to seize and consign him to the bottomless pit, they have allowed him to roam at large, and not merely have they left him (for how long?) in undisturbed possession of by far the larger portion of the world, but have permitted him to regain much of those fair domains which Messiah had wrenched from him by such sacrificial efforts—which he had liberated at such expense from his tyrannous dominion. They have betrayed into his hand the fortresses from which they should have assailed his camp, and issued forth in pursuit of the routed hosts of his adherents.

Satan has not yet been bruised and bound. The heat of the conflict with "principalities and powers," with "the rulers of the darkness of this world," has yet to come on. Are Christians alive to the impending crisis? Do they look like men about to engage the hosts of the infernals, for the spiritual life and liberties of a world? Are they buckling their heavenly armour on—seizing hold of the weapons that are not carnal, and united in one unbroken phalanx, boldly fronting the foe? Alas! it is far otherwise. Let such be their position and bearing, and victory should soon be theirs. Let them follow the footsteps of their Leader and Commander—his injunctions let them carefully observe. Let them sound the trumpet of the gospel in every land, making the joyful proclamation issued from the court of the "King of kings"—"Liberty to the captives,

and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." Let them contend in the spirit of their Master, looking to him for direction and encouragement—depending constantly on his power, for what is mortal strength against such foes?—and then shall they engage the strength of Omnipotence on their side, and shall certainly prevail. "The kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ." Babylon shall fall. Satan shall be bound and shut up in "the bottomless pit." And there shall be "heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia; for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth, let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him."

SECTION V.

PRINCIPAL PHASES OF SCHISMATIC CHURCH POLITY.

THAT schismatic polity which has so long disfigured and paralyzed the church, presents itself to our view in two great forms or phases; namely, that under which super-scriptural terms of communion are enforced by the authority of the church only; and that under which they are enforced by the authority of the church, being combined with, or supported by, the authority of the state.

When a church institutes terms of communion which the Scriptures do not warrant, she becomes both schismatic and despotic, whether she attempt to enforce these by ecclesiastical or by civil power. If by the former, she demands a uniformity in opinion and observances which the Scriptures do not enjoin, in order to the enjoyment of her communion; if by the latter, she compels men to enter her communion, in order to produce a uniformity which the Scriptures require not. This sort of schismatic des-

potism, when exercised in its unrelaxed rigour, proscribes all who refuse submission to it. The only terms it offers are conformity or death. The other form of schismatic polity shuts out from communion with the church every one, however high his Christian character and attainments, who will not conform to all her peculiarities, and casts forth from her bosom whoever changes his views or practice in regard to any of these;—all such she declares unfit for the kingdom of heaven, and consigns them to the same condition with murderers, and whoremongers, and idolaters. Were it not that our apprehension of evils which bear on our spiritual nature is so much fainter than of those which assail our corporeal frame, and were it not that we have been so long familiar with such proceedings, they would produce on our minds almost as deep an impression of arrogance and cruelty, as that produced by the enforcement of ecclesiastical uniformity by the sword.

The former of these phases of schismatic church polity may subsist unconnected with the state, as well as connected with it; but not so the other. The alliance of civil power is involved in its very existence, as no church can compel men to enter her communion except by physical force; and the end aimed at cannot be accomplished, but by the most terrible and deadly application of that force; for if religious uniformity is to be maintained in any community, all recusants must be subjected to expatriation or death.

Each of these forms of schismatic church polity

involves a virtual, if not explicit, assumption of dictatorial or legislative authority, though, in the respective cases, made for a different purpose, and maintained by a different sort of power. The objects aimed at differ in this respect, that what the one is intended to effect with regard to the entire community, the other is intended to effect with regard to the sect or church. If the object aimed at by the one be to make all the inhabitants of the country in which it is established, however numerous, entertain the same belief, and practise the same religious observances, the object aimed at by the other is to make sure that such shall be the case with regard to all the members of the church or sect which it embraces.

Whoever dictates to his brethren what they are to believe and practise in religious matters, assumes authority over them; for authority, real or assumed, is implied in dictation. And what a man dictates or enjoins, he always intends, if necessary, and if practicable, to enforce. When spiritual despots—for such they are who assume such authority in the church—when spiritual despots find their dictates disregarded, (as they cannot effectively command the soul, nor coerce and punish it, but through the medium of the body,) their resource is physical force. They either attempt to seize the sword of civil power themselves, or—which they much prefer, if possible—instigate those who bear it to draw it against all recusants. Numerous and melancholy are the examples of this which are furnished by the history of the church;

and they would have been yet far more numerous, if the spirit by which sectarists have been actuated had not often failed to command the requisite power. The spirit which prompts men to desire the suppression of any community of religionists, by any other means than the diffusion of truth, will prompt them to attempt its literal extermination, whenever circumstances favour such an attempt.

When a body of men, appropriating to themselves the title of the church, assume the power of dictating what others shall believe, and of prescribing in what mode they shall worship God, another step to be taken, in order more effectually to attain the ends they aim at, is to secure the fountains of knowledge, in order that none may obtain that essential element of mental expansion and vigour except from their hands; and that they may have the power of dispensing it in such quantities, and so attempered, as shall best suit the purposes they have in view. And, alas! melancholy experience has taught the nations, or ought to have taught them, how scanty, and often deleterious, the supplies are which come through such a medium. The crowning act of spiritual despotism—the consummation of its cruelties—is the withholding from the people the word of God,—that inestimable boon of heaven—a right to the free use of which God has conferred on every individual of our race, and in which every human being has an interest, compared with which, his interest in every thing else the world contains sinks into nihility. Yet spiritual tyranny arrests this vehicle appointed

by God to convey to all the erring and deluded children of men the gracious announcement of his love and pity towards them, and the disclosure of the amazing provision he has made for their salvation: spiritual tyranny arrests this heaven-descended vehicle in its course of mercy through the world. It (to use another figure) imprisons the only light that can pierce "the thick darkness" which enshrouds the termination of the cheerless and rugged path of man.

Christians, though by no means chargeable with the sin of schism, in separating from churches in which the dictates of men are enforced, may yet become schismatics, by erecting for themselves an exclusive form of church polity; and, indeed, nothing has been more frequently exemplified than this.—For instance, Luther and his associates, though they did not become schismatics by refusing to submit to the impositions of the Romish church, yet became schismatics, when they made the views of Luther, with respect to the presence of Christ in the eucharist, a term of communion. The Presbyterians of Scotland, though they did not become schismatics, by refusing to adopt the liturgy, and submit to the jurisdiction of the Episcopal church, adopted measures both schismatic and despotic, when they attempted to enforce on all the nation Presbyterianism and the covenant. So, likewise, is it with the Lutherans, at the present time, in Prussia—their refusal to adopt the new liturgy, prescribed by the

king, does not constitute them schismatics, but their refusal to acknowledge any other reformed church besides their own, as a church of Christ, constitutes them decidedly such.

The enforcement of the dictates of men, in regard to religious matters, in any community, if it does not produce schism, will ultimately sink that community into the most awful of all conditions, spiritual death. For we find, that wherever a despotic church has succeeded in suppressing dissent, this fatal success has been followed by the extinction of piety. Witness the condition of the Romish church, in every country in which she succeeded in suppressing the Reformation—in exterminating those whom, in her arrogance, she designates heretics.

SECTION VI.

EVILS OF SCHISM.

In the former part of this work we have briefly adverted to some of the advantages of Christian unity, and have found that it is eminently conducive to personal piety, and to the happiness of families—intimately connected with the prosperity of the church, and with the conversion of the world. But however great may be the advantages of Christian unity, the evils of schism must be of corresponding magnitude; and to the most prominent of these we now propose briefly to advert.

Schism, then, we remark, in the first place, is fearfully inimical to the spiritual prosperity and enjoyment of Christians individually. Those who are actuated by a schismatic spirit are characterized in Scripture as "babes in Christ"—weak, ignorant, carnal, and conformed to the world. "Whereas," says the apostle to the Corinthians, "there is among you envyings, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?" This is a state of cha-

racter fearfully at variance with that which distinguishes the Christian whose soul enjoys prosperity and health—a state which, if it become habitual, must issue in the extinction of spiritual life, for, "to be carnally minded is death." The soul that becomes carnal by cherishing hatred, must be alienated from God, for he is love; and, if it be separated from him who is the source of spiritual life, that life cannot but perish. If we regard religion as the divine image re-enstamped upon the soul, a schismatic temper always tends to obliterate that image, the most prominent distinctive feature of which is love. How unlike the Father of mercies, and the God of peace, are those who hate and calumniate—"bite and devour one another."

In considering the advantages and importance of Christian unity, we adverted to the wondrous and most intimate communion which those who love God—who manifest love to him by keeping his commandments, especially, by acting in the spirit of that evangelical law which enjoins love to the brethren for Christ's sake—are to enjoy with the Eternal Father and with his only begotten Son. "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you. . . . He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him. . . . If a man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our

abode with him." Such are the terms in which this ineffable communion is announced. How fearfully inimical to the enjoyment of this communion must a schismatic spirit be, for it is the violation of the chief of the commandments of Christ—of that which is indeed the essence of them all—in the keeping of which alone this communion is to be enjoyed. He who allows in his heart such a spirit, cannot continue in that exalted state of privilege and enjoyment into which such communion lifts the soul. Infinite love cannot dwell with him who admits into his heart a hatred directly repugnant to it. Such a feeling must becloud the brightness of divine manifestations; for the light of the divine countenance is a light which shines only in the atmosphere of love—shines only in hearts in which love reigns—shines most brightly on those that are most glowing, making them burn the more intensely ever as it shines. To him who indulges in a schismatic spirit, the brightness of the divine countenance must be obscured, for there emanates from his soul an influence which repels its exhilarating light. And who can estimate the amount of loss and injury which a soul sustains, by being cut off, even but for a season, from the vivifying emanations of the love of a saving God—of him in "whose favour is life," and whose "loving kindness is better than life?"—Shut up from communion with him, it becomes feeble, comfortless, and unprofitable, easily drawn aside from its proper course by the world, peculiarly exposed to the seduc-

tions and assaults of Satan, and in imminent danger of becoming his prey.

The prevalence of schism not only causes religious professors to doubt or deny the Christian character of each other, but keeps also the greater part of them in a state of harassing anxiety and doubt respecting their own spiritual condition. Love to the brethren is the most impressive and the crowning evidence of discipleship, and is not less essential to personal assurance of connection with Christ, than it is as evidence of this connection to fellow Christians and the world. The same infallible authority that taught the apostle to say, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren," likewise affirms, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another." Vast numbers of Christians, in our times, appear in habitual uncertainty respecting their spiritual state; in fact, so common is this condition of mind become among serious professors, that it constitutes one of the most striking discrepancies between the character of Christians generally in the present age, and that of Christians in primitive times, as it is exhibited to us in the New Testament. John could affirm, without hesitancy, on his own behalf, and that of those to whom he wrote, "We are of God;" and Paul, "I know in whom I have believed;" and, triumphing in the fulness of faith, he could exclaim, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" And what was it that shut out from their hearts doubts and fears?

The Apostle John shall tell us—"Our love is made perfect that we may have boldness in the day of judgment. . . . . There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear; because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love." The love of the brethren is in most Christians, in our times, so feeble—or is generally so partial and restricted in the range of its objects, that their hearts cannot have sympathy with God in his love to all his children, and in the joy with which he rejoices over them. Their affection wants the expansion necessary to a full and elevating communion of spirit with him. In reference to this, as well as to the other kind of Christian liberality, those whose hearts have been enlarged to admit any thing like the full measure of the spirit of the gospel, are but few. The attention which a Christian of true liberality, or catholicity of spirit attracts—the wonder which his temper and conduct excites—not to speak of the opposition which he may frequently meet with, or the distrust with which he will by not a few be regarded, are proofs how far the church has left her first love, and ought to lead her to examine her conduct and her spirit—to consider whence she has fallen, and repent—should excite her ardently to desire and pray that the spirit of her Head may be diffused anew through all her members; for that is the only spirit in which she can prevail. If the prayer of the apostle were the aspiration of the heart of every Christian, we might hope, ere long, to see a renovated church and a renovated

world:—"Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen."

Then, in the second place, schism contributes fearfully to embitter domestic life. The surface of society presents, to the eye of the Christian and philanthropic observer, evils sufficiently appalling; but, were the furious under-currents, and the boiling caverns that tumultuate beneath laid bare—were all the wickedness that is committed in secret disclosed, with all the injustice and cruelty that are perpetrated and suffered unseen, and all the jealousies, and bitter contentions, and revengeful hatred, which prevail among relatives and in neighbourhoods;—and, could all the sorrow, and anxiety, and remorse, which rend and corrode human hearts be revealed,—who could endure the scenes which on every side would meet his eye?—the sun himself would hide his face from such a world. But does not the church present a striking and delightful contrast to this dismal picture? Are not her homes the abodes of love, and peace, and fraternal enjoyment? Would that they were!—but, alas! too many of them are sadly the reverse. A schismatic spirit not only openly convulses and rends the church, but also fearfully agitates and embitters domestic life—filling with contentions and strife the homes in which peace and happiness should reign. A schismatic spirit separates hearts which, by the ties of nature as well as of

grace, should continue united. It makes parents to attempt to check an enquiring spirit in their children, and to endeavour to compel them to adopt their opinions, and adhere to their observances. It makes children to despise their parents, on account of what they may deem their weaknesses or misconceptions in regard to religious matters. It inflames the hearts of brothers and sisters against each other; and alienates the affections of husband and wife—severing from each other those who, by the appointment of heaven, should be "one flesh."

Thirdly, In devoting a few pages to the public evils of schism, it cannot be expected that we should exhibit these in detail, for that would require a volume of itself, or rather would be to write anew the history of the church, for what page of that history is there which is not darkened by them? What, indeed, with the exception of a few bright episodes, is that history, but a history of schism, with its causes, and its concomitant evils. No such attempt being to be expected within the limits of such an essay as this; we will confine ourselves to what may appear to us the most impressive features of some of the more prominent and prevalent public evils of schism; and, first, we shall select one or two illustrations of the tendency of schism, to neutralize the diffusive power and influence of Christianity.

No division, perhaps, which has broke out in the church, better deserves to be designated a schism, than that which was produced among the early pro-

fessors of Christianity by the ascetic enthusiasm. The ancient ascetics separated themselves from their Christian brethren, broke off from the activities of life, and practised austerities, in utter misconception of the requirements of Christianity. Inflated with spiritual pride, they despised their brethren who continued to engage in secular avocations, and who maintained the necessary and divinely sanctioned connections of social life—claiming exclusively for those who lived in celebacy, and indolent abstinence, the virtues of continence, chastity, and temperance. Moreover, the schism of the recluses involved and fostered (how could it have been otherwise?) disaffection towards those from whom they withdrew. And no schism has produced more fearful evils in the church than this. Every reader of ecclesiastical history knows to what excesses monachism ultimately led, how much it contributed to foster delusions of the most serious kind respecting the essential principles of religion; with what superstition and fanaticism it covered the church, and what dens of abomination the monasteries became. But even in its earliest and least offensive forms, monachism produced effects scarcely less fatal to the extension and prosperity of the church. The wisdom and power of God are strikingly manifested in his making even the wrath of man to praise him—in rendering subservient to the accomplishment of his purposes what seems adapted only to thwart and frustrate them. Thus, the rule delivered by Christ to guide the conduct of his disciples, when assailed by perse-

cution, was adapted to render the attempts made by the enemies of the church to raze her from her foundations, conducive to her extension and triumph. —"When they persecute you in one city, flee to another." And, accordingly, we find that the first persecution of the church at Jerusalem was productive of such effects; for we are informed that those who were scattered abroad by it "went everywhere preaching the word." They fled agreeably to their Lord's injunction, still holding to the abodes of men. Persecution, likewise, assailed the Christians of succeeding ages, and they too fled, many of them, but betook themselves, not to other cities, but to mountains and deserts. The inevitable consequences of such expatriation must be obvious to every one who at all reflects upon the matter. In proportion as Christians cut themselves off from connection with their fellow-men, and withdrew into solitudes and caverns, Christianity was deprived of the medium through which, according to the appointment of its Author, it was to operate on the unconverted world. The leaven, whose fermentation was eventually to assimilate to itself the whole mass of humanity, was removed from amid that mass, and exposed to dry and harden on bare rocks and arid wastes.

The religion of Christ is essentially social; it authenticates and enforces anew the relative duties, and the power which it manifests in correcting the evils, and enhancing the enjoyments of ordinary life, ranks among the principal means by which it dif-

fuses its saving influence among mankind. But dissolve the social ties, and we will be able to find nothing to which, in their obvious meaning, the great majority of Christian precepts can apply. If authority and rules for the ascetic life are to be sought for in the New Testament, it must be in a mystic or hidden meaning; for, certainly, neither of these will be found, if its moral code be taken in the meaning which obviously and naturally presents itself to common sense. Accordingly, we find that the ascetic schism brought with it, as a necessary concomitant, the pernicious hypothesis of a double sense in Scripture, that being the most important which was mystic; and the obvious grammatical import being nothing but an allegorical veil, beneath which the true and spiritual meaning was couched. Such an hypothesis afforded ample scope for eluding the force of every moral precept, and enabled men to find ground and authority in Scripture for every error in belief, and every extravagance and obliquity in conduct.

The reflex influence of the withdrawment from the world of the ancient recluses, contributed greatly to enhance and exasperate a worldly spirit, in that portion of the church which adhered to the engagements and connections of social and active life. Whatever of the spirit of mammon was thrown off, by those who withdrew from the world, fell back on those who remained. When many of the leaders and instructors of the church, smitten with the mental epidemic of the times, put forth all the

powers of their eloquence, in order to excite to this spurious sort of self-denial, those engaged in the necessary business of life would have to listen, day after day, to exaggerated and inflated representations of the sanctity and pleasures of indolent contemplation; and to turgid harangues, denouncing the primary link of social union, and the indispensable engagements of social life, as degrading and contaminating—as incompatible with the *supra-terrene* elevation and purity of the "elect of Christ." No wonder that those whom interest and inclination still held to mundane affairs, exasperated by such representations and appeals, producing uneasiness, but not conviction, should be impelled thereby to devote themselves more entirely to the world. Contemned as an inferior class of Christians, or scarcely recognised as Christians at all, it was nothing to be wondered at if many of them should be tempted to vow, that they should not be continually frowned on and despised for adherence to the world, and yet not enjoy it. Such were some of the pernicious effects of the ascetic schism in its incipient stage, when it wore its fairest appearance, and could plead the most specious reasons on its behalf; when it gained enthusiastic admiration, and drew forth unmeasured encomiums from such men as Basil, Ambrose, Cyprian, and Augustine. Alas! for the church and the world, that they understood so ill the genius and spirit of Christianity.

Ample illustrations of the pernicious tendency of schism might be furnished, by tracing the influence

of the contentions, and strifes, and tumults of the ancient church, on the elevation of the Roman Pontiff to that fearful height of despotic power, by which he held the nations so long in the dust, and trampled on the necks of monarchs. It might be shown, that when spiritual domination, or lordship over the consciences of men, is once assumed, it invariably seeks for, or tends to produce, a centre of power, in which it may obtain consolidation and effective energy; for of all conditions of society, whether civil or religious, anarchy is the one most alien to the constitution of man, and anarchy is the inevitable consequence of the assumption of independent legislative or dictatorial power, by a number of individuals in the same community. It might be shown farther, how, after the legal establishment of Christianity, the spirit of domination prevalent in the church, sought such a centre in the Roman emperors, but found in them but a very vacillating and precarious one; and that after the destruction of the Western Empire by the Barbarians, it tended gradually in the Latin church towards the bishop of Rome, who had previously enjoyed a sort of precedence, as being the bishop of the metropolis of the world. But into any such disquisitions we cannot here enter, but must hasten on, and fix upon another prominent illustration and proof of the fearful tendency of schism to neutralize the diffusive power and influence of the Christian church.

Every one at all acquainted with the past is aware

of the signal resuscitation of true Christianity, which took place in several of the European nations about three hundred years since, and which, with the ecclesiastical changes to which it led, has obtained the specific designation of the Reformation. Those conversant in church history likewise know, that when the principles of the Reformation had gained an ascendancy in various countries over the errors and corruptions of Romanism, the most appalling schisms broke out in the reformed communities—schisms which have never been exceeded in exclusive rancour, and intolerant virulence—so that within less than a hundred years after the commencement of the Reformation, its promoters were found actuated by a spirit as rancorously hostile towards each other, and exciting as vehemently to mutual extermination, as was the spirit which possessed the Romish church towards them. But extraordinary excitement, of whatever kind, must eventually be succeeded by lassitude and depression. The virulence of schism gradually subsided in the reformed churches, but, alas! its abatement was preceded by the decline of piety; and ere another century had elapsed, spiritual life was well nigh extinct in the reformed communities. The red horse of mutual persecution had been followed by the pale horse of death.

Seeing that the religion of the Reformation had manifested its power, by carrying its adherents successfully through in their contest with Romanism; seeing it gained strength, and spread forth amid the fierceness of persecution, and sprung up with reno-

vated vigour from the ashes of martyrdom; why did it afterwards decline, when it had risen above the power of its foes? Why did its vital energy become almost extinct, when no hand was moved against it? The main cause of this fearful decline of religion in all the reformed communities was, we conceive, the contempt put on that central and supreme Christian virtue, charity, in its twin-sister forms, of influential love towards the entire brotherhood of the faith, and towards all mankind.

A proper estimate of the peculiar and trying circumstances in which the Reformers were placed —of the fearful corruption and tyranny of that ecclesiastical system with which they had to contend —of the unbounded power by which it was supported, together with a fair allowance for the bias which their minds must have received by being trained under it, should guard us against pronouncing harshly respecting them, on account of errors in judgment, or evils in temper and conduct, into which they fell. But neither such considerations, nor the veneration with which we regard their memory, on account of the good which they effected, should make us shut our eyes to the mischievous tendency of those errors into which they fell, and of those evils which they allowed to pass uncorrected, especially since now that tendency has been fully developed in their pernicious and fatal results. As far as the Reformers followed Christ and acted in his spirit, they are entitled to our admiration; and on account of the peculiar difficulties and disadvantages of their situation,

they are entitled to large allowance for misconceptions and error: but it harmonizes ill with the spirit of Christianity to regard them, or hold them up as models of perfection—to conceive, contrary to all precedent and all analogy, that they started forth from the darkness of midnight into the full splendour of noon-day. If Christianity, as taught and practised by them, embodied in perfection its principles and spirit, alas for the church! alas for the world! The circumstances in which persons may be placed, though they may tend to produce, will not excuse, bitterness of temper, or intolerance of administration. The injunction of Christ to his disciples, when they should be involved in the suffer ings of perhaps the most appalling catastrophe which ever befel any section of mankind, was, "In your patience, possess ye your souls."

There is a most intimate connection between love to the brethren in Christ, and commiseration for those who remain unsaved. That love to fellow Christians which springs from love to Christ cannot find rest—cannot repose in the fulness of satisfaction—while there is a single wanderer without his fold. It embraces all who bear his image; and it will not say it is enough until it can embrace the world. But the love which is restricted to a party, does not excite desires that all mankind should become of that party—it draws its strength from opposition; and a party is kept together by the pressure from without—when that is removed it must fall to pieces. The spirit of party excites desires that its

opponents should be subjugated or exterminated, rather than converted. But Christian brotherly love is not the love of a party. It is the love of moral excellence and beauty, and depends on nothing extraneous. Of the twin-forms of Christian charity to which we have referred, love of the brethren in Christ is the elder and stronger grace, on which its younger sister—commiserative love towards sinners—leans, and supported by which it goes forth to bless its objects. Whatever weakens brotherly love will diminish the active power of compassion for sinners. Schism first causes us to neglect or contemn our brethren, and then hardens our hearts toward the unconverted, and these evils combine with fearful power in diminishing piety toward God. "For he who loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" "Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need,"—and what destitution once to be compared with that of the gospel of the grace of God?—"and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" And thus we conceive it was that religion declined so disastrously in the reformed communities. The members of these became disaffected towards one another, too many of them were found "doting about questions and strifes of words," and engaging in "profane babblings, which increased unto more ungodliness." Too often was it true of them that they strove "about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers," and "their word" did

"eat as doth a canker." In their mutual contentions they became insensible to the claims of the unconverted world. While, by disregarding the injunctions of the Spirit of God, that "the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle towards all men, apt to teach, patient in meekness, instructing those that oppose themselves," they became disqualified for being instruments of good to their common opponents; for it is only when such injunctions are observed, that Christians are permitted to hope concerning such, that, "peradventure, God may give them repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will."

The Romish system was hateful, and its corruptions and impositions, when seen in their true aspects, could not fail to rouse indignation; but we are ever in danger of transferring hatred from a system to those who support it, and this is an error which the reformers did not escape. They displayed too much hostility towards the persons of Romanists. They manifested more of hatred and indignation against them as oppressors and deceivers, than of commiseration for them as beings of "one blood" with themselves, many of whom laboured under fatal delusions, or were exposed to fearful peril, by the errors which they held, and the sins in which they indulged. Truth was spoken boldly by the Reformers, but was seldom spoken in love; and therefore it prevailed but partially, and for a season. Light so strong,

breaking in on darkness so thick, could not but produce powerful effects; but instead of bringing with it that genial warmth of love which makes "the planting of the Lord" to expand and flourish, it was edged like the east wind which nips the tender herb, and pierces with inexpressibly annoying keenness the valetudinary frame.

That fundamental doctrine of the Christian system, the justification of a sinner by faith in Christ alone, the Reformers brought out pure from the mass of rubbish in which they found it buried, and held up in its vivifying lustre as the star of hope to the nations. And they held it not up in vain. Thousands looked to it and lived—rather came to him to whom it leads, and were healed. But the moral code of Christianity is not less distinctive and peculiar than are its doctrines, being, in fact, a counterpart, or image of them. For as Christ laboured and suffered for his people for the love wherewith he loved them, it is his appointment that they should labour and suffer for each other and the world, from love to him. That essential branch of Christian morals —vicarious devotement of substance and energies, and even of life, if required—("we ought," says John, "to lay down our lives for the brethren,") —the Reformers failed distinctly to apprehend, and therefore did not teach. True it is, that by the soundness and vigour of their piety, they were themselves impelled to labour for the good of others; and by the cruelty of their enemies, many of them were subjected to sufferings and even to death, their sub-

mission to which proved eminently conducive to the benefit of their fellow-men. But when the reformed religion had once gained predominance in various countries, the great majority of its professors in such countries, recognising no demand on them for Christian exertions, after spending their strength in vain wranglings, or diverging into error, gradually sunk into spiritual death. Another consequence of this neglect of the highest order of Christian duty was, that religion in many, even of those in whom it still retained some vital power, became sickly and querulous—a sort of pampered and selfish pietism—unheedful of its obligations to the brethren and the world, and studious only of its own comfort, and observant chiefly of its own frames.

We have said, that Christianity is distinguished from other religious systems, not less by its morality than by its system of belief; and whoever disregards or mutilates the one, will not long hold entire the other, or will do so for little purpose. "Love the brotherhood."—"Go and teach all nations;" these are injunctions that stand forth prominently in the morality of the gospel, and are peculiar to it; and neither individuals nor communities that set them aside from the code of laws by which their feelings and conduct are habitually regulated and directed, can hope to be long visited with manifestations of the Divine favour. Moreover, no important principle in faith or morals can be displaced, but something will come in to occupy its room. Thus, in the early ages of the church,

while many neglected real and effective self-denial, they substituted in its place abstinence and corporeal mortifications. And thus in the same way the Reformers, while scarcely any of them appear to have recognised, as duties ever binding on all Christians, the reception as brethren of all who bear the image of Christ, whatever circumstantial differences may obtain among them; and the preaching of the gospel to every creature of the contemporaneous generation, so far as means and opportunities can be found for doing so,—the Reformers, we say, while they lost sight of these, manifested an undue anxiety about the religious condition of their posterity, and a most punctilious solicitude that their faith might be transmitted entire and unaltered to them. Not content with training up their children in the way they should go, and confiding in the appended promise, that, when old they should not depart from it, they vainly endeavoured to fence them in, that they should not have it in their power to do so. But those fences which they reared around the church, or rather with which they divided her, while they have nowhere been proof against the subtlety of error, have proved stumbling-blocks and barriers to multitudes of conscientious men; and though they have entirely failed to exclude heresy, have contributed largely to transmit discord and division unabated even to our times.

So dimly did the Reformers apprehend the great principles of Christian liberty—that liberty which is guarded by love—that scarcely any of them conceded

to others what they claimed for themselves. The liberty which they sought—may we not affirm without injustice—too much resembled that boasted of by American planters,—freedom for themselves and those whose faith was of the same complexion with their own; but bondage and coercion for all whose belief or ritual differed by the slightest tinge from the colour of theirs. Indeed, it was not Christian liberty at all which they contended for—deeply do we regret to say it—but sectarian domination.

Had the Reformers and their successors been properly actuated by that love which prompts men to "do to others as they would that others should do to them," they would never have attempted to force whole nations to submit to one form of church order, and one ecclesiastical jurisdiction. This is clearly evinced by the facts, that, while each of the various parties into which they were divided aimed at this, or attempted it, if they had power, each of them in turn refused submission to the impositions of the others. Had the leading Reformers conceded to others what they claimed for themselves—liberty to adopt what forms of worship and church order they might deem most agreeable to the word of God—the church, neither paralyzed nor soiled by the touch of worldly power—would have made her way by the expansive energy of her principles, and the attractiveness of her moral beauty; and truth and love would have had full scope to operate on the minds of all. When truth alone, and though often presented in a harsh and repulsive form, produced such wonderful

effects, what might it have done had it appeared in the vivified beauty of love! But the necessary result of the unchristian and preposterous attempts to make the church co-extensive with the population, was a general corruption of her communion, by the reception into it of hosts of unsanctified members—an evil pregnant with the most destructive effects. This junction of the dead with the living operated most unfavourably on the spiritual condition of the latter, gradually inducing that assimilation of character, which the Apostle Paul has represented by the fermenting process—"A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." How fearfully was this declaration verified in the case of many of the Reformed communities! Thus, the decay of religion in the Reformed churches may be traced in various ways—none of them either lengthened or circuitous—to the contempt put on Christian charity as its main cause.

We must bear in mind that the evils resulting from the decay and subversion of the Reformed religion, were not confined to the countries in which it had obtained footing. In its appearance, a benighted and perishing world hailed the rising of a star of hope. But by the spiritual declension, and the inertness of the Protestant churches, this hope has been—how long—deferred, how long threatened with entire extinction! Since the dawn of that light which promised soon to irradiate all the nations, how many generations have passed away, and how little a portion of the world has yet been visited by its beams! Schism tarnished the lustre of

living Christianity in the renovated churches—paralyzed its expansive power—and smote it with disaster, when its victory was half achieved. And how could it have been otherwise? What army could conquer, or even keep the field, whose cohorts engage in fierce assault against each other, instead of advancing on the foe?

The divisions of the Protestant churches supply Romanists with their main argument against them, an argument no refutation of which will avail, till these divisions be healed. What can be gained by affirming that the Protestant churches are essentially agreed, while in the eyes of all mankind they remain in separation, and are often engaged in open war? Nor are the divisions of Christians generally less stumbling-blocks to the Jew, the intelligent Heathen, and the Mohamedan, in the way of their advance towards the truth, than the divisions of Protestants are to Romanists; the impressions made on their minds by Christianity, as it presents itself in the world, are often indicated by the way in which they meet those who endeavour to persuade them to embrace it. "First, agree among yourselves, and then we will believe you," is the bitter taunt which such frequently receive—a taunt which a person of ingenuous mind must feel the more keenly that he knows it not to be unmerited. Thus, schism among Protestants prevents the purer form of Christianity from supplanting the corrupted. And so the church, continuing in the eyes of an unbelieving world, torn and polluted, proves the main obstacle

that prevents its cordial reception of the Christian faith, instead of being an attractive light and joy to all lands.

Christ instituted his church, and arrayed her in robes of light, that by her attractive power he might draw all men to him; and had she retained her pristine unity and glory, long since would she have brought to him the riches and homage of the nations; for, in that case, every addition to her numbers would have been an increase to her power, and an enhancement of her glory. But her lustre was soon tarnished, and her attractive influence neutralized; and so far as schism contributed to produce these disastrous effects—and we know that it did so largely—it has become the occasion of the continuance of all the evils which prevail, and have so long prevailed among the myriads of the unsanctified inhabitants of our world. The wickedness and miseries of mankind are proofs of the guilt of the church, and seals of her shame. Christians, wherever they behold idolatry, or superstition, or cruelty, or war, or drunkenness, or any other form of sin, should reflect that these yet prevail among men, because the church is schismatic and debased,—because she has lost her vivifying lustre and antiseptic power,—because she has ceased to be "the light of the world," and "the salt of the earth." The deplorable condition of the world, in respect to moral character, is the index of the infidelity of the church to the trust committed to her by her Head. Are the majority of mankind still

idolaters, ignorant and debased? Are an hundred and fifty millions adherents of the false Prophet? Is Israel still unsaved? Does a tyrannous and corrupted form of religion prevail over the larger portion of the nations that bear the Christian name? These evils continue to exist mainly because the true church is schismatic. The disciples of Christ have not continued "one;" therefore the world has not believed that the Father has sent him. Christians! think of the awful condition of the world!—Think of it in connection with the history of the church!—Think of the moral character of the majority even of those that dwell on the most favoured parts of the earth—parts which are regarded as religion's chosen homes. Think of these things in contrast with the delightful pictures given by prophets of old, of the purity and happiness of the world in latter days; and while you do so, remember how fearfully schism has contributed to perpetuate this reign of evil, and to obstruct the progress of all that is good; and your minds will be in possession of one element of a proper estimate of the public evils of schism.

We must now proceed to consider another class of evils resulting from schism. Hatred is the essence of a schismatic spirit; such a spirit is, therefore, essentially cruel. Accordingly, we find that true to its nature, it has in instances without number proved a fearful stimulant to persecution. All persecutions of one sect or party of Christians by another have sprung from schism. Indeed, it is a

truth so obvious, that it scarcely requires to be stated, that, had there been no schism in the church, Christians would never have persecuted one another. But a schismatic spirit has instigated persecutions of more appalling cruelty than any that the church ever suffered from her foes. Most of us, it is to be feared, are accustomed to regard schism as but a trivial evil, if we do indeed apprehend it as an evil at all. The mischievous effects which it produces in our age and country are of that nature which, alas! makes but a faint impression on us; for we have never tasted of its bitter fruits—the iron of its cruelty has not entered our souls. Even the most powerful imagination can but very faintly and inadequately realize the horrors produced by schismatic cruelty when possessed of power. Ere we could obtain a just impression of its tremendous character, we would require to behold some of the most appalling scenes which it has enacted rise in prominent relief before us. Such as, for instance, the heart-rending sufferings of the Waldenses, under the infamous order of Gastaldo—an order to quit their homes, and leave their country in the depth of winter. We must behold tender mothers, with babes in their arms, and little children at their side; the sickly, the blind, the lame, and those decrepid with age, in mournful trains wandering, without hope of shelter or asylum, over precipitous mountains covered with frozen snow. We must behold the aged grandsire, or the mother with the babe at her breast, dying, unheeded, on the cold unsheltered

glacier.—Or, the massacre of St Bartholomew—the horrid scenes of the night of the 24th August 1572, and the succeeding days: the Protestants of Paris, sleeping unsuspectingly on their beds, lulled into security by the pretended friendship of Charles, dreaming of nothing but safety and peace: the rabid schismatics issuing forth amid the silence and obscurity of midnight—emissaries of "the rulers of the darkness of this world"—armed and prepared to commence the long-meditated and deeply-concerted work of death—breaking open the house of the Admiral Coligni—rushing into his apartment—the assassin thrusting the sword through his heart—regardless of the high station and distinguished character of his victim—regardless of the entreaty, "Young man, respect these grey hairs." The streets of every city in France flowing with the blood of Protestants, in obedience to royal orders that one should not be left to reproach the monarch with breach of faith.—Or, the Netherlands under the horrid atrocities of Alva. The inhabitants hunted by troops of soldiers flying from their native land in thousands—the country illuminated, as if it were a high festal jubilee, with the fires of martyrdom. Persons of all ages, sexes, and conditions, indiscriminately dragged by horses to the place of execution—committed to the ever-burning fires—their tongues scorched with glowing irons, to prevent them from then attesting the truth of their profession, and screwed into machines contrived so as to produce the most excruciating pain.

And though we could behold all these appalling scenes, still we would be far from competent to form a proper estimate of the tremendous character of schism—yea, even though all the victims of its cruelty should pass in succession before us. Though we should behold—first, all the ejected ministers of Christ—those whom schismatic tyrants have interdicted from breaking ‘ the bread of life”—moving on in mournful silence—prevented even from speaking to their bereaved and weeping flocks. And though all the expatriated might next pass before us, moving on in long and doleful array—wanderers in the wildernesses of strange lands, sighing with regretful longings for the scenes of their youth—the homes of their hearts. Then all that have been proscribed by persecuting tyrants, dwelling in caves, and among the fastnesses of rocks,—the plaintive tones of the “ songs of Zion,” as sung by them, mingling at midnight with the roar of the tempest, amid frowning precipices, or eternal glaciers. Then, were all the pestilential dens and dungeons disclosed to our view, in which the excellent of the earth have been immured—occupying a wider space, and tenanted by a more numerous population than the largest metropolis,—their inmates fearfully lacerated and distorted, wasting and dying in solitary agonies, no other couch on which to lie than a mat on the damp floor,—no ear open to their complaints save that of God—no eye to pity them but his. Next, could we see all the victims of torture writhing in the boot, in thumbikins, suspended by cords around

their bare limbs, dislocated in every joint by squassation. Lastly, could we behold all who have been condemned to the gallows, the block, or the flames, led on to execution,—might we see them hanged, beheaded, committed to the flames, to fires contrived so as to prolong unutterable agonies—fires which it were mercy to augment; ghostly inquisitors, nobles, kings, and bishops, instigating multiplied inflictions of cruelty, finding gratification in proportion to the agony of the sufferers. Could all these rise in succession before us, and could we endure to look upon them all, what would be the turbulent intensity of our emotions! And yet, after we should have beheld the whole, we should have seen but a limited portion of the evils of schism.

For there would still be wanting another and by far the most important element, in a full and comprehensive estimate of its tremendous evils. Man is destined to eternal existence—is appointed to live for ever in happiness or woe, and it is from their bearing on that existence that objects draw their importance. Nothing is other than insignificant which has no influence on it, but every thing is unspeakably momentous which possesses such an influence. Did the evils of schism terminate in this world, fearful as those are which it here produces, its character would be vastly changed. But schism has essentially a bearing on eternity, a bearing of the most momentous kind. By obstructing the progress of vital Christianity, by neutralizing the expansive power of the Church, it has put forth an influence of the most

disastrous character on the eternal destiny of myriads of mankind. And a schismatic temper, habitually indulged, has stamped on innumerable spirits the image of the "wicked one," bringing them into a fearful fitness for being everlasting companions to "the devil and his angels." Could, then, in addition to all the other scenes which we have conceived to be disclosed—could the veil that hides the unseen economy be lifted, and could we, on the one hand, behold the abodes of the lost, and through the ascending "smoke of their torment" perceive, in the crowded wards of perdition, the multitudes whose prevailing character was hatred of the brethren—the myriads that have the mark of the beast, "who have shed the blood of the saints,"—"tormented with fire and brimstone, and gnawing their tongues for pain." And might we behold, on the other hand, heaven opened, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, waiting—where he has waited these eighteen hundred years—with the vast and extended mansions prepared for his people standing around him but thinly tenanted,—waiting for his saints to go forth with him to take possession of his kingdom, for he would not take it without them,—he would lead them out with him to the battle, that they might share in his triumphs, that they might reign with him for ever. Could we hear him, with a "voice like the sound of many waters," commanding, entreating, beseeching his people to become one, and to go forth under his banner, the banner of love, that the world might believe and be saved—that the

mansions of his Father's home might be filled: appealing to them with intense earnestness, and plying them with the most powerful motives, and yet all in vain;—they the while disregarding his entreaties and appeals, quarrelling with each other, reviling, hating, separating from each other. Could scenes like these be disclosed to our view, in conjunction with the evils produced by schism in the present life, then, if our existing constitution could sustain the intensity of our emotions, we might be able to form something like an adequate estimate of the tremendous evils of schism. But our nature, as at present constituted, could not sustain such revelations of the spiritual and retributive economy; and the existing constitution of things, in regard to our world, precludes our beholding any of the others; the former are therefore wisely hid from our sight, while in the Scriptures they are revealed to our faith; and history supplies us with materials for forming conceptions of the latter. And should either scenes which have been witnessed on our own world, and recorded as instructive warnings to future generations, or the realities of another life, fail to impress us deeply, because we do not behold them with our eyes, because they are objects only of imagination and of faith. Should we not put in exercise these noble powers of our nature, and thus enhance their capabilities? Should we not by them frequently realize both scenes that have passed away, and scenes that have yet to be disclosed, and act habitually under the influence of such realizations? Should not the

astounding declaration of the "Faithful and True Witness," that "he that hateth his brother is a murderer," and that "no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him," produce on our minds as influential if not as vivid an impression, operating as powerfully in deterring us from the sin of schism, as if we beheld those who have left this world with the character which this declaration so emphatically condemns, "tormented day and night with fire and brimstone, in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb?"

And now, Christian reader, review in your mind the many and appalling evils of schism. Think of its tendency to cut off the soul from the vivifying emanations of Divine love. Think how it beclouds the light of the Divine countenance. Consider how fearfully the schismatic becomes assimilated in character to the wicked one. Think how much schism has embittered domestic life. Think of the woes it has occasioned which no tongue has told, and no eye has seen,—of the tears it has caused to be shed in secret,—of the sighs it has drawn forth, and of the groans that have been emitted under its appalling tortures. Think of what multitudes of the saints, of "men of whom the world was not worthy," it has consigned to the wilderness—to dungeons—to the gibbet—the block—and the flames. Then reflect how fearfully it has obstructed the salvation of the world,—how it has neutralized the proper influence of the redeeming and renovating grace of heaven,—

how it has torn and disfigured the body of Christ, and thus robbed the world of the crowning proof of his Divine mission,—how it repels the quickening and renovating power of the Holy and Blessed Spirit. Think how it tends to deprive the Saviour of the satisfaction he derives from beholding the accomplishment of the ends of the travail of his soul,—how it holds him back from taking possession of his kingdom,—from receiving "the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost ends of the earth for his possession." Remember that it is the main cause of the fearfully protracted unbelief of the world, and consequently of its continuance in wretchedness and guilt. And, finally, reflect how long it has kept comparatively empty the prepared mansions of glory, and how fearfully it has replenished the regions of perdition. And will not such a review of the tremendous evils of schism make you to regard it with the deepest abhorrence, and excite you to spare no effort, and to shrink from no sacrifice, in order that you may fence out from your heart the spirit which produces it, or expel it unrelentingly if it has found a lodging there? Will not such a review effectually prompt you to shun or forego whatever might tend, directly or indirectly, to produce schism? Will it not impel you to repair to the fountain of Divine love, that your soul may be filled till it overflow with love to all your Christian brethren, and with commiseration for the unsaved myriads of mankind? Will you not be anxious to lend the largest possible measure of aid and influence to heal the breaches of Zion,—

to restore her to her ancient glory,—and reinvest her with her rightful power? Will you not join with ardour in the prayer of your Redeemer, that his people may all be one, that the world may believe that the Father has sent him,—that He has "loved the world *so* as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life?" Will you not fervently pray, that the Lord Jesus Christ may, with the breath of his mouth and the brightness of his coming, speedily consume whatever is sectarian, and nourish and consolidate whatever is catholic; until all his people become again as at the first, "of one heart and one soul," "striving" only and "together for the faith of the gospel," and for the diffusion of that faith through all lands?

SECTION VII.

SINFULNESS OF SCHISM.

"SIN is the transgression of the law"—the law of God; and schism is sin, for it is the transgression of the law of Christ—of that which is pre-eminently *his* commandment, that his people should love one another, and receive one another as brethren in him. And if we may form an estimate of the importance of any duty, from the frequency with which it is enjoined in Scripture, and the variety and force of the persuasives by which men are urged on to its performance; or, if we may estimate the heinousness of any sin, by the solemnity and earnestness with which men are warned against it, and the awful character of the sanctions by which the laws respecting it are supported; the attentive reader of Scripture will perceive, that the duty of brotherly love, and the sin of hating the brethren—the essential principles respectively of Christian unity and schism—stand pre-eminent. And it is obviously right, that brotherly love should have pre-eminence among the

duties of Christians towards each other, seeing it is the moving spring that impels to the right performance of all the rest. And it is as obviously right, that the principle which is the antagonist of this love should be emphatically condemned, as pre-eminently sinful, seeing it is not merely a single isolated sin, but a principle fearfully prolific in the production of other sins—sins whose direct tendency is to produce schism—whether operating singly, or in any of those innumerable forms of combination which they assume.

There subsists such an intimate connection between the love of God and love of the brethren, that the Scriptures pronounce the one the sure criterion of all professions of the other. "If a man say I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" "He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love." Who shall estimate the heinousness of that sin which stands in such fearful antagonism to the love of God! Hatred of the brethren is a proof that he who indulges it, whatever may be his pretensions to sanctity, is still spiritually dead. "He that loveth not his brother abideth in death." And it has a powerful tendency to keep the soul in that awful condition, seeing its operation in the mind is so fearfully repugnant to that love of God, which inspires believing confidence in him—the essential principle of spiritual life.

Sin against the brethren Christ regards as sin

against himself; and he has declared that it were better for a man "that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depths of the sea, than that he should offend one of his little ones." But the schismatic glories in offending these, if they follow not with him,—in despising, in vilifying them, and in exposing them to derision. But in treating them in this manner, Christ regards him as thus treating himself; and he has declared that the mode in which men treat his brethren will be made the final test of relationship to him, and that the condemnation of all false-pretenders to such relationship, will proceed on the broad and distinct ground, that they had denied relationship with his brethren on earth,—that they had separated *them* from their sympathies and their benevolence. And it will be held a sufficient ground of condemnation—a full proof of alienation in character from God—to have acted thus, even toward the least of them. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

But those whom the schismatic hates—he loudly denies their claim to be regarded as brethren; and he vilifies their character in order that he may make them appear proper objects of detestation. But though the schismatic may now urge as an excuse for his conduct towards his brethren, that he does not regard those as such whom he hates and abuses, the Scriptures do not warrant us to flatter any one that such an excuse will avail at the divine tribunal. We are assured that ignorance of God will not be re-

ceived as an excuse for hostility towards him; for "the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, taking vengeance" as well on those "who know not God as on those who obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." And we have previously remarked that misconceptions respecting the character of our brethren will not palliate hatred towards them. Wilful ignorance, as it is not only the fertile source of disobedience, but as it embodies deep-seated disaffection, and maintains its existence by shutting its eyes to copious and most interesting volumes of knowledge spread out before it; stands in the same class with the most aggravated forms of transgression, and is threatened with a doom equally fearful. He who so far misapprehends the Christian character, as not to recognise the brotherhood of eminent Christians, who differ from him on some points of doubtful speculation, or of ecclesiastical polity, gives strong indications of serious misconceptions respecting the character of God, after whose image all true Christians are created; and evinces fearful ignorance of the character of Christ, of whom all true Christians are imitators—whose character is the model after which theirs is formed; he therefore incurs a fearful risk of the condemnation of "those who know not God." And his disaffection towards such brethren violates the law of love—the new commandment—which is by eminence the commandment of Christ; the schismatic, therefore,

stands exposed likewise to the doom of those "who obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." His guilt ranks with, mingles with, and aggravates, guilt of the most fearful forms.

It belongs not to us to apply the law, or assign the measure of condemnation in individual cases. We are not permitted to judge our brethren—to forestall the decisions of the divine tribunal. Nor should we set limits to the grace of God, which nothing shall limit but obstinate and final impenitence. The Judge of all the earth will do right, and well may we confide the matter to his hands, when such proofs meet us every day of his competence for the task. Even amid the inextricable confusion—as it appears to us—of the moral world, the elements of judgment and mercy now take their course, each to its object without obstruction or collision, in instances of almost infinite number and variety; and however impracticable it may now seem to us, God shall certainly without fail bring each to bear on its proper objects at the consummation of all things, when every individual shall have completed his prescribed term of moral discipline, and shall display in full relief the lineaments of what shall be his eternal character.

But though we must not presume to determine, respecting any individual, whether he shall stand at last on the right hand of the Judge or on the left, we have the unequivocal authority of Scripture for declaring that the doom of the unrepentant schismatic is perdition. "He that hateth his brother is a

murderer, and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." He that shutteth up his bowels of compassion from even the least of the brethren of Christ, he that disregards their necessities, or any way despises or maltreats them, and repents not for such sin nor forsakes it, shall rank at last with the wicked—with those who shall receive the fearful sentence, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." And for the society of these, virulent schismatics have attained a fearful fitness. No class of sinners are so assimilated in character to the wicked one, as those that are become confirmed in the indulgence of a schismatic spirit. Not sensualists, for the sins which predominate in them fallen spirits are incapable of committing. Not infidels, or atheists, for in the existence of God devils believe and tremble. Not even ordinary murderers, for they aim only to kill the body, but Satan assails the body in order that he may compass the destruction of the soul. He has been a murderer from the beginning—but it is as a destroyer of souls that he has emphatically gained this character. And it is in this emphatic characteristic of the devil that the schismatic is fearfully identified with him, for not only is his sin the main obstruction to the conversion of the world, not only is its direct tendency to "destroy the work of God"—to cause to perish those for whom Christ died; but he would, were it within his power, consign the excellent of the earth directly to perdition. Satan is "the accuser of the brethren," their accuser even before God,

and in this respect, too, the schismatic bears his image—he accuses his brethren not only before his fellow-men; but even when he kneels as a suppliant at the footstool of the throne of grace; he accuses them there, and, with a fearful oblivion of every feeling proper to his situation, pours forth his envenomed hatred before infinite love, and imprecates evils from infinite goodness, even on those whom it "delights to honour." Thus is the schismatic assimilated to Satan in those features of his character by which he is pre-eminently distinguished as an audacious enemy of the saints—bent on their destruction. Other classes of sinners have their types and patrons among the subordinate chiefs of hell,—as the cruel in Moloch—the covetous in Mammon,—but Satan himself alone was fit to be the type and patron of the schismatic.

But though we behold the schismatic assimilated in character to Satan, and even rising into rivalship with him in destructive influence, still we have not sounded the depths of his guilt. Those of mankind who have been in any measure recipients of "the grace of God which bringeth salvation," may be guilty of sin aggravated more fearfully than any sin of fallen spirits can be. Christ "took not on him the nature of angels;" he gave not his life a ransom for them;—he is not their Saviour, and consequently they cannot be guilty of sin against him as such. But it is far otherwise with those of mankind who enjoy the revelation of the heavenly grace—far otherwise with the schismatic. Before a person can

be guilty of the sin of schism, he must have a place in the visible church; he must have a zeal of some sort for the religion of Christ—at least for some form of religion which bears the name of Christianity. His thoughts and feelings must have been engaged about religious matters, in quite a different manner from that in which the thoughts and feelings of those who yield a mere listless assent to the truth of Christianity are engaged about them. He must in some measure "have been once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, . . . and of the good word of life, and of the powers of the world to come." Now he who in such a state of enlightenment and spiritual privilege, so far from continuing in the "work of faith and labour of love," indulges hatred towards any of his Christian brethren till it becomes the habitual temper of his mind, cannot do so and retain the distinctive spirit of Christianity, for by the indulgence of such a temper of mind that spirit must eventually be extinguished, and the inevitable result of its extinction is separation from Christ, for it is the declaration of his inspired apostle, that "if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his." He, then, in whom this fearful catastrophe occurs, falls away from Christ into the fearful condition of the apostate—the most fearful into which man can fall out of perdition—for whose return even charity may not hope, whom "it is impossible to renew again unto repentance,"—"who crucifies the Son of God afresh" by tearing his body, the church—"and puts him to an open shame."

Who shall estimate the amount of such guilt—guilt against which the Scriptures give the most awful warning, by declaring that for it there is no atonement?

The sin of schism transcends in heinous aggravation any sin of devils, because it is not merely the direct and frustrating antagonist of infinite mercy, but because it is so in those who are the objects of this mercy, whom it has done so much to save. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son"—gave him to pass the life of an outcast, and to endure a malefactor's death, that he might by such a manifestation of love draw all men together in him, and bind them into one firmly-compacted and majestic body, having all its members pervaded by a mutual sympathy unspeakably endearing and tender. "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved." And Christ appeared in the world as the incarnation of infinite tenderness and love, in order that by the infusion of these feelings into the hearts of men by the power of his Spirit, he might allay its animosities, heal its divisions, and hush its tumults and turbulence into peace. Yet even that august and astonishing order of means which has been put in operation by the vicarious efforts and endurances of Infinite Love—even the cross of Christ itself, which ought to be the most powerful stimulant of love, and the centre of Christian unity—has been converted into an occasion of bitterness and strife, and cruelty, such as the world never

before beheld. Christ broke down "the middle wall of partition" between Jews and Gentiles; he by the cross slew the enmity that subsisted between them, "that he might reconcile both unto God in one body;" but when the church became schismatic, it seems as if this enmity, transformed into sectarian hatred, had started into life again, with enhanced vigour and intensified virulence. If sin against God as Creator and Sustainer, even the least sin, deserves everlasting punishment, what must be the guilt—what the desert of sin against God as a Saviour, and a Saviour such as he is to us? Who shall estimate the aggravations of that sin which frustrates such grace as the grace of God to man, which precludes the love which prompted such a sacrifice as he made from attaining its ends? Yet such is the sin of schism.

We have adverted to some of the evils which this sin produces. "God will have all men to be saved." —"He is not willing that any should perish," and Christ "gave himself a ransom for all," and it was his earnest desire that his people should be one—that they should be "of one heart and of one soul" —that they should declare the riches of his grace as with one voice among all nations, that the world might believe that the Father had sent him—"that the world through him might be saved." But schism has fearfully contributed to frustrate this beneficent and sublime purpose. Schism has sullied the noblest grace of the Christian character—that charity through which all its other graces shine. It has invested

that character with a repulsive instead of an attractive aspect. It has robbed the world of the most impressive proof of the divine mission of Christ. It has deprived the Holy Spirit of the most powerful instrument for impressing the religion of the cross on the minds and hearts of men. It has chiefly been by schism among the hosts of the Lord that Satan has been able to retain the world so long under his dominion after being vanquished by Christ. Schism holds back the Messiah from taking possession of his kingdom, which he hath won by his blood. It has caused, and is still causing, souls to perish in myriads, though for their salvation "all things are ready." Who shall estimate the heinousness of that sin which is productive of such evils? Who can endure to think of his doom who continues to indulge in it till death, without penitence, and without pardon? May the constant and fervent prayer both of the writer and the reader be—"Lord, deliver me from blood-guiltiness"—from being thus guilty of the blood of souls. And "let us consider one another to provoke one another unto love, and to good works; not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another; and so much the more, as we see the day approaching. For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three

witnesses; of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

SECTION VIII.

TESTS OF A SCHISMATIC SPIRIT.

AND now, Christian reader, in order that you may be able the more effectually to expel or fence out a schismatic spirit from your heart,—that you may be qualified to lend an effective influence towards the restoration of unity to the Church,—that you may shine the brighter and the more attractively as a light of the world,—and operate the more powerfully as a portion of "the salt of the earth," it deeply concerns you to institute a careful scrutiny in order to ascertain whether you are allowing any thing of a schismatic tendency to exist or operate in your heart or conduct. And for the purpose of rendering you some assistance in this important exercise, we intend in this section to lay before you some characteristics of a schismatic spirit,—some tests by which it may be detected, should it lurk in your heart.

Do you then esteem and love professors of religion, and seek intercourse with them, rather because

they entertain certain opinions, or belong to certain sections of the Church, than because they have made high attainments in the Christian life, and bear the lineaments, strongly defined, of the Divine image? If such be the case, your love and your communion partake of a schismatic character. You do not love the people of Christ simply because they are his, and for his sake, else you would, irrespectively of every thing extrinsic, love those most who bear the strongest resemblance to him.*

Are your prayers more frequent or more earnest in behalf of your own "Church" or "Connexion" than in behalf of the entire community of the faithful, "the church of the Lord, which he hath purchased with his blood?" If they are, you have not fully imbibed the spirit of Christ, who prayed for all alike who should believe on him, nor that of his apostle, whose prayer was, "Grace be with all them that love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." As many as walk according to this rule—glorying in nothing but the cross—"peace be on them, and mercy, and on the Israel of God."

Are you more anxious about the increase of your own denomination or party than about the conversion of sinners? Does it give you greater joy to hear of accessions to it from other communions, than of accessions to other communions from the world? Then you are not only actuated by a schismatic

* These remarks are not to be regarded as bearing against special friendships among Christians; these have the sanction of the example of Christ. They refer only to cases where these do not exist.

spirit, you are labouring under fearful insensibility to the value of souls, seeing you regard as of more importance specific views of certain matters of ritual or speculation, that the believing reception of that knowledge which maketh wise unto salvation.

If engaged or interested in any religious or ecclesiastical controversy, are you gratified when your opponents are treated with harshness, asperity, or ridicule, while you experience the risings of anger or indignation when persons of your own denomination or party are so treated, and are ready to retaliate on those who ridicule or despise them? If such be the case, then, look well to your spirit, for the subtile poison of schism is operating there. Far from loving your brethren as Christ loved you,—far from loving them even as yourself, there lurks in your heart disaffection towards them; you love them not at all; for love cannot be gratified when its objects are harshly treated, it cannot endure to hear them despised, it feels itself keenly wounded by whatever shafts of ridicule are directed against them. If you would retaliate, when you or your party are abused or derided, you are inclined to violate an inspired injunction not to render "railing for railing;" you are inclined to pursue a course directly the reverse of that pursued by him whom you should imitate, "who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; who, when he suffered, threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously."

Are you ready to catch and cavil at slight inaccuracies, mis-statements, or errors, when those who

differ from you may fall into them, and which charity would regard as unintentional; while you are forward to excuse such when fallen into by persons of your own party? Such a temper of mind indicates disaffection on the one hand, and undue predilection on the other—it indicates a schismatic spirit. Are you apt to be irritated when any one questions the correctness of your opinions? do you distaste any examination of them, or frown upon it? If so, you manifest ignorance and pride,—states of the mind which prepare it for imbibing a schismatic spirit—together with a self-conceited attachment to your own opinions, rather than a desire to know the truth. The temper of your mind, if not already schismatic, is in great risk of becoming so.

Do you triumph in any prosperity and success enjoyed by your own denomination? are you elated by whatever contributes to raise its character? do you glory in those splendid geniuses which may brighten the line of your ecclesiastical ancestry? while you regard with something like jealousy the prosperity of other denominations, behold with reluctant eyes the good which they may be enabled to effect, and hesitate to accord to their distinguished men the honour which their mental and moral greatness may merit. If these are characteristics of the temper of your mind, they indicate a spirit strongly schismatic: they indicate a widely different order of feeling cherished regarding Christians of one class, from that which is cherished in regard to all others.

Do you receive with elation any discoveries of

truth—or what you may conceive to be such—made by persons of your own fraternity,—discoveries which appear to you confirmatory of your own peculiar views; while, when discoveries are made by others, or inferences legitimately drawn, which militate against these views, you feel as if you could wish they had remained for ever in oblivion? If such be the case, you are not actuated by a proper love of truth; nor by an habitual readiness to receive it from whatever quarter it may come, but by a selfish attachment to preconceived notions, by a spirit essentially schismatic.

Do you speak of the faults and failings of persons of your own communion with reluctance and sorrow, carefully introducing every extenuating circumstance; while you are forward to speak of those of persons to whom you are ecclesiastically opposed, and do so in language tinctured with bitterness, presenting their failings in the most unfavourable light, by adducing aggravating circumstances, even without making careful enquiry respecting their truth? If you thus act, surely you exhibit evidence that you are far from being actuated aright by that charity which "thinketh no evil," which "rejoiceth" only "in the truth." Are you forward to impute improper motives to those who promulgate opinions or pursue courses of conduct which you do not approve? are you ready to pronounce men no Christians for such reasons, while the other proofs of the genuineness of their Christian character are numerous and strong? If such be the case, you are not rightly

influenced by that charity which "believeth all things, and hopeth all things." Do you ever feel at all inclined to rejoice in the sins and failings of those who are ecclesiastically opposed to you? do you experience any other feeling regarding these than that of deep sorrow? If you do, you are destitute of that charity which "rejoiceth not in iniquity," your temper is fearfully schismatic, fearfully assimilated to the spirit of the wicked one.

Do you shun the society of your brethren who differ from you? Do you refuse to co-operate with them in promoting objects respecting which you are agreed with them, even though these objects should be of the highest importance, and your co-operation essentially necessary to their accomplishment? As, for instance, would you rather allow the inhabitants of some heathen country, or of some destitute part of your own land, to remain without the gospel,—to go down to their graves without ever hearing the joyful sound,—than assist in sending those to preach it to them, who adhere to a different form of church order from yours? If such be the temper of your mind, a schismatic spirit is deeply seated there, you are actuated by strong disaffection towards your brethren, resulting from voluntary, and therefore criminal ignorance and misconceptions regarding them, combined with fearful insensibility towards the spiritual condition of those who are ignorant of Christ, and a mournful preference of circumstantial observances to his last commandment. Instead of being a co-worker with your Redeemer in promoting his

cause, you are fearfully contributing to its obstruction.

Were you to hear of some signal triumph of the gospel of Christ in a distant part of the world,—some glorious manifestation of saving grace; would it in any measure mar your joy, to learn that it had been effected through the instrumentality of Christians to whom you are ecclesiastically opposed? If it would, it becomes you to scrutinize your heart, for a schismatic spirit is lurking there,—a spirit sadly out of harmony with that of the pure and exalted inhabitants of heaven, who rejoice over the conversion of sinners by whatever instrumentality. How different from such a spirit was that which actuated the Apostle Paul? "Some indeed preach Christ," says he, "of envy and strife; and some also of good will. The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds; but the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel. What then?" exclaims this magnanimous missionary of Christ, "What then? notwithstanding every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice." If the apostle so intensely desired that Christ should be preached, that he could rejoice in its being done, even by those who did it insincerely, and for the base and cruel purpose of "adding affliction to his bonds;" what shall we say of *his* spirit?—what shall we think of his estimate of the gospel of the grace of God, and of the value of the souls of men, who, so far from

rejoicing when it is preached at all, by whomsoever this is done, will not rejoice though it be preached correctly and sincerely, unless it be by those who follow in every point with him? If you refuse to rejoice in the preaching of Christ, by those whom he is acknowledging as his servants, by rendering their labours effective for converting sinners; if you refuse to recognise and acknowledge such as his ministers, because they have not come into the sacred office through the medium of your church, you are actuated by a spirit which is manifestly schismatic—you are even setting yourself in fearful opposition to your Redeemer, by contemning and despising those whom he delights to honour.

The spirit which dictated that element of church polity, which interdicts qualified men from exercising the office of ministers of Christ, in certain communities of professing Christians, unless they subscribe to all the articles of a prescribed confession or creed, and submit to various rites of human imposition, is much a-kin to that which actuated the disciples of Christ, when, seeing one casting out devils in his name, they forbad him, because he followed not with them—a spirit which our Lord emphatically condemned, when he said, "Forbid him not, for he that is not against us is for us." It is, indeed, a spirit essentially both schismatic and despotic; and he whose mind, in its ordinary state of feeling, harmonises with, and approves of it, cannot be acquitted from the charge of being a schismatic.

The schismatic would have his own party to en-

gross all success, therefore he is jealous of the labours of others, and chagrined at their successes; especially if they approach his borders. It is quite natural and proper to desire our own views of truth to prevail; but it is not proper to desire them to prevail in any other way than by free and full examination. If we desired only the prevalence of truth, we would permit and encourage the fullest and freest enquiry; indeed, we are not true-hearted Protestants if we act otherwise; we would invite men to "prove all things," knowing that it is only by doing so they can "hold fast that which is good." Then, allowing in our churches the utmost range of opinion consistent with Christian faith, and the greatest diversity of observance compatible with Christian character; party envyings and jealousies would be extinguished by an enlightened love of Christian liberty and truth; sectarianism would lose its sting, and even its life; we would encourage the labours, and rejoice in the successes of our brethren of every name; and even distinctive names themselves would sink into desuetude.

And now, Christian reader, if you have felt that you are chargeable in any measure with any of those feelings or actions here adduced as characteristics and indications of a schismatic spirit—and if you do not feel that you are at all thus chargeable, either you have attained to rare eminence in the Christian temper, or you are woefully insensible to your real spirit and character, which of these is the case, it mch co ncerns you to enquire;—we say, if you are

conscious of being at all chargeable in temper or conduct with any thing schismatic, rest not till you have set yourself in earnest to the correction of the evil. But this you know you need not attempt in your own strength. Come then to the throne of the heavenly grace, penitent for your sin, and imploring forgiveness; pray that your heart may be filled with the spirit of Christ—the spirit of love, and that by Divine strength imparted to you, you may be enabled to resist all temptations to this destroying sin. See that the temper of your mind harmonizes with the temper displayed by John, and Peter, and Paul, and James. When the spirit which actuated them—which breathes in all they wrote—shall be rightly understood and appreciated, and imbibed by the Christian community, a new era will open on the church, an era of glory such as she has not beheld since their days.

SECTION IX.

DISGUISES OF SCHISM.

Sin, purely evil in its nature, gains favour chiefly by putting on the semblance of goodness; like its great originator and promoter, who is often most successful when he assumes the appearance of "an angel of light." Thus sins, which, if they had presented themselves to us in their native deformity and mischievous character, would have been instantly repelled, by appearing in the attire of virtues, gain our esteem, and insinuate themselves into our hearts. And in respect to no sin is this more mournfully exemplified than in respect to the sin of schism. It often assumes the character of the highest order of virtue—of the most imperative duty.

1. Schism frequently assumes the disguise of zeal for the cause, or the glory of God. That such would be the case was plainly foretold by our Lord. On the night before his crucifixion he thus forewarned his disciples of what they had to expect from dominant religionists. "They shall put you out of

the synagogues; yea, the time cometh when whosoever killeth you shall think that he doeth God service." This fearful misconception hides entirely from the view of him who labours under it the evils of the course which it prompts him to pursue, while it forms another element in addition to those we have already adduced, as contributing to give to a schismatic spirit its peculiar virulence. Once let the schismatic, with a heart inflamed with hatred, become fully persuaded that he is acting for God, that he is promoting his cause by persecuting and exterminating those who differ from him in religious opinions or observances—once let him regard himself as the commissioned agent of Jehovah for the destruction of his enemies, who (as he proceeds on the assumption of the infallibility of his own judgment, and on the presumption of his being the privileged favourite of heaven) must be those opposed to him—once let him make these enormous assumptions (and enormous though they be, the history of the church affords melancholy proof that they are far from being rare)—and no degree of zeal can appear too intense for such a high functionary. What zeal could be too flaming, what measures too bold, or too decisive, for him who is engaged in vindicating the Divine honour and authority among a race of contumacious revolters, impiously warring with their heavenly King? Nor is such a person ever at a loss for precedents, for the course he pursues, in the conduct of men who acted under the immediate direction of Jehovah himself. "Were

not Moses, and Joshua, and David, the chosen and inspired vicegerents of heaven, and did not they, agreeably to express Divine injunctions, not only exterminate the idolaters of Canaan and the Amalekites, but also put to death whoever refused obedience to the Divine law?" Such is the authority under which he takes shelter. But, unfortunately for him, it is only the authority which bore on an abrogated economy; and he appears entirely unconscious, or regardless of the fact, that such proceedings have been strictly and solemnly interdicted in the kingdom of Christ. When the inhabitants of a village of the Samaritans would not receive our Lord, his disciples, James and John, we are informed, desired permission to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, after the manner of Elijah; but Christ turned and thus rebuked them—"Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." The disciples of our Lord were forbidden to take the sword, enjoined not to resist evil, and commanded, when persecuted in one city, to flee to another. When Christ was questioned by the Roman governor whether he were a king, his reply was, "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is my kingdom not from hence." But the bearing of these declarations and injunctions the exterminating schismatic, by a strange fatality, perceives not; their force he does

not feel; although they stand forth with such prominence in the New Testament—although it is the distinctive spirit of the new economy which they embody. How shall we account for such extraordinary obtuseness of perception? Where shall we find a solution of such an enigma? Only in that revelation from heaven which furnishes the key to the strange inconsistencies exhibited in the character of man. Why does not the exterminating schismatic perceive at once, as if by a sunbeam, how fearfully inimical are his temper and conduct to the spirit of that religion which he professes to have received? "Sin and Satan have blinded his mind."

Our Lord himself experienced the deadly malignity of that spirit, which, under the guise of zeal for God or for his law, afterwards made such fearful havoc in the church. Inflamed by it, the chief priests and rulers of the Jews stirred up the multitude against him, and made them extort from the pusillanimous Roman Governor the sentence of death.

The same spirit, under the same disguise, and in its deadliest form, actuated Paul previous to his conversion—"I verily thought with myself," says he, "I should do many things against the name of Jesus of Nazareth."—"Being exceedingly mad against them," (the disciples of Christ,) "I persecuted them even to strange cities."—"Men, brethren, and fathers," said he, addressing the Jews, "I was zealous towards God, as ye are all this day, and I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women."

And it has been under this, or a kindred disguise about to be noticed, that the schismatic spirit has chiefly made its way in the Church, in all countries and in all ages. Under this disguise it attained its deadliest virulence in the Romish Church. Her pontifical head being infallible, the doctrines and decisions of the Church, as delivered by him, were of course true and right—were by consequence the expression of the mind and will of God, and whoever resisted his authority, resisted the authority of God, and his doom was death in this world, and perdition "in the world to come."

Well had it been for Europe and the world, if the schismatic spirit had presented itself under this disguise only in the Romish Church. But every reader of ecclesiastical history knows how far otherwise it has been. It descended from the heights of Romanism on all the reformed communities in almost unmitigated virulence; instigating them to pursue similar courses of despotism and persecution, so far as they possessed or could command power. And it becomes any who may congratulate themselves that their church has not been so intolerant as others—and has never been guilty of such cruelties—to consider whether this is not as much to be attributed to the situation in which it has been placed—as much owing to want of sufficient powers, as to more enlightened views of the genius of Christianity.

2. Zeal for the truth is another of the disguises which schism frequently assumes. The most furious

schismatics and polemics are often heard loudly denying that they are actuated by any unchristian motives, or are exciting any unchristian feelings. It is pure zeal for the truth that inspires them—that is, according to the most charitable construction that can be put upon it, zeal for their views of it. Thorough bigots will not admit that there is the least possibility they can be mistaken; to allow a doubt might admit or encourage examination, to which they cannot for a moment trust. No, no; the matter is as clear as noon-day to all who do not shut their eyes. They are right; their opponents are wrong. They maintain and defend the truth of God, and woe to all opposers. But if it be a pure and proper zeal for truth that actuates such persons, why is it not surrounded and sustained by the scripturally accredited order of feeling, that order of feeling peculiar to the new heart, in which alone a right zeal for truth can operate? Why are not "love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, and meekness," manifested in conjunction with it? The proper criterion whereby zeal should be tried—whether it be Christian or spurious,—is, Does it burn in love? If it does, it will turn hostility and persecution into fuel for benevolence, even as the hardest metals may be made to burn in oxygen with an intense and brilliant flame. Such was the character of the zeal of our Lord, of whom it was written, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." The fearfully cruel and malignant treatment which he received from men, only deepened his compassionate concern for

their welfare. "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," was the aspiration which rose from the depths of his heart for those who derided and abused him in his final agonies. Any zeal for truth, or for the cause of God, which prompts not to the putting up of such a prayer for revilers and persecutors, is not true Christian zeal—it will not stand the apostolic test, "Though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing."

3. Corresponding to the last mentioned disguise of schism, or rather we should say its counterpart, is another which it very frequently assumes—namely, hatred of error. The hatred of the Jews towards Christ assumed this disguise. The accusations brought against him were—"We found this fellow perverting the nation."—"We heard him say, I will destroy this temple made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands." And when, in reply to the question of the High Priest, "Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven, . . . the High Priest rent his clothes, and said, What need we any farther witnesses? Ye have heard the blasphemy, what think ye? And they all condemned him to be guilty of death." And if he had not given indubitable proofs of his Divine character and mission, the sentence would have been just, according to the Mosaic law. "If he had not done among them the

works that none other man did, they had not had sin" in condemning him to death, for making himself equal with God. But the works which he did having fully borne witness of him, the impious and malignant nature of their zeal was fully disclosed, the declaration of Christ was fully verified, " Now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father." Notwithstanding the multiplied proofs which he gave of it, they remained wilfully and obstinately blind to his Divinity. Even so have schismatics ever evinced a kindred blindness in separating from Christian brethren, under pretence of hating their errors. Shutting their eyes to the proofs which these have furnished of discipleship, they, in utter ignorance or disregard of fact, have characterised opinions—adverse to theirs—regarding doubtful matters—matters respecting which Christians of the most exalted order have held opposite views—as damnable heresies; and have magnified involuntary mistakes of judgment, or unimportant misconceptions, into criminal errors, excluding from salvation, while their schismatic spirit has been clearly evinced, by their regarding those whom they loudly denounced as thus fearfully involved in error and guilt —not with commiseration, but with virulent hatred. Error is something too subtile to support an antipathy that presses with such intensity as that of the schismatic; it therefore fixes on the persons that are regarded as holding error, and when possessed of the requisite power, and, sufficiently excited, coils itself around its victims, and crushes them to death.

4. Another, and the last disguise of schism which we shall specify, is zeal for that particular section of the church to which a person may belong, and devotedness to its interests. Zeal for one portion of the Christian community often covers, and is even regarded by many as excusing, or justifying, jealousy, and, perhaps, hostility, towards all other parts of it. Many seem under the influence of such a strong predilection for the peculiarities of their own denomination, that though these should rest on no higher authority than that of its founders—should have no sanction in Scripture—may have been productive of schism at their introduction, and calculated to perpetuate it—they still cling to them with pertinacious devotedness, as if they were badges of honour, or as the colours of the corps which have long proudly waved over the fields it has gained—enthusiastic devotedness to which has impelled its ranks onward to victory. By such persons the interests of other Christian communities are thwarted, or at least overlooked, in an engrossing carefulness about those of their own; only let it prosper and be extended, and the decay, or even extinction, of others would give them little concern, or would be productive of positive gratification. And, indeed, this is nothing but what we should expect from those who regard their denomination as the only true church, and who must consequently desire and believe that it shall become universal—that every other ecclesiastical community shall be swallowed up by it. While the members of the various sections into which the church is un-

happily divided entertain such notions, and are actuated by such feelings towards one another, each of these sections must be kept in a state of melancholy isolation, as if real Christians, far from being united in love to one head, yielded their devotions to many divinities, as jealous of each other, and as factious as the gods of mythology. Thus, all zeal on the part of Christians for their own church or denomination which produces disaffection or jealousy towards other Christian communities, or disregard of their spiritual interests, however specious its appearance may be, is of a schismatic character—is but the spirit of schism in disguise.

PART THIRD.

CONDITION, DUTIES, AND PROSPECTS OF THE CHURCH.

SECTION I.

EXTERNAL CONDITION OF THE CHURCH.

Evils which men are accustomed to behold from their infancy, and with which they are daily coming in contact, are seen by few or none in their true aspects—by none, at least, of those who are any way engaged in supporting them. And such is our situation in regard to the existing condition of the church. Its aspect is little changed from what it was when we looked upon it in our unreflecting years; we have grown familiar with it, and it moves us not. We are accustomed to wonder greatly that such eminent and excellent men as Pascal, and Fenelon, and the Divines of Port-Royal, should have remained so insensible to the enormous evils of the Romish church—not reflecting that we ourselves will furnish occasion for almost equal wonder to Christians of coming ages. To one who could form a comprehensive and vivid conception of what the church ought to be, and who should compare such a mental image of her with her present aspect—to one

who could distinctly trace on the roll of inspiration all the sinews of her strength and lineaments of her glory, she would present a melancholy and dismal spectacle—a spectacle in fearful contrast to the attractive and glorious delineations of her which the Scriptures contain, and calculated to produce a most painful revulsion of feeling when beheld after contemplating such delineations. But why does not this contrast forcibly and painfully impress us, the Christians of the present age? Why do we allow habit to indurate so fearfully our percipient powers, so much to our own injury—so much to the injury of the cause of Christ? "How was it," will the Christians of a future era be prompted to ask concerning us—"How was it, that though the church in their times was torn, corrupted, feeble, and lethargic—How was it, that though the 'Holy city' lay in ruins—'trodden under foot of the Gentiles,' scarcely a voice was raised to bewail her desolation, scarcely a hand stretched forth to repair her breaches?—How was it, that amid all the boasted light of the nineteenth century, there was so little love, and so much animosity, bitterness, and strife? What shall we think of the Christian professors of those times? Can they have been Christians indeed?" And is there not in our character more than enough to furnish ground for such doubts, among those who shall live amid the unity and purity of the millennial church—the church when she shall embrace the entire human family? Before the reader put a hasty negative on this question, we would request him for

a little to contemplate, first, the present external aspect of the church, and then the prevalent spirit of her members. In this section we mean to take a rapid glance chiefly at the first of these—the second will come under our consideration in the next.

That "every kingdom, divided against itself is brought to desolation," is a rule to which the history of the Church shows that she is no exception. During protracted and disastrous ages she has been divided against herself, and her "long desolations" present themselves on every hand.

The saving light of Christianity has for a long millennium suffered a dense obnubilation in those regions of the earth where its beams first gladdened the hearts of men; and in many cases even the "candlesticks" by which it was held up have been removed. A mental lethargy, which has from immemorial ages prevailed over Eastern Asia, and especially in the "Celestial Empire," (where for thousands of years the human mind has scarcely felt a breath of agitation, as if lulled into somnolency by that calm and tideless ocean which washes its shores;) has been gradually advancing westward, and has settled down on nations that were once the most illustrious in all that is characteristic of the highest improvement and activity of the mental faculties Early in its progress, and as if by a leap in advance, it seized on the Greek church—which, exhausted by long and fierce contentions, was prepared for becoming its prey. And for more than a thousand years she has continued a soulless petrifaction, utterly

passive in regard to all surrounding influences; and thus she still continues,—sunk in the lethargy of dotard senility, as respects every thing connected with the eternal welfare of mankind—"dead," with scarcely "a name to live."

Since the era of the Reformation the Romish church has given symptoms of the advance of the same sort of lethargy upon her. Up to that period she had continued to swell in corruption, and to rise in arrogant assumptions and unblushing audacity; but ever since, as if smitten with immobility, she has remained unaltered in all her main features, and has scarcely been disturbed in the possession of her territories, unless by infidelity and atheism, which now appear to be ceding back to her what they had gained. After fifty years, crowded with political convulsions and revolutions,—though thrones have been overturned, and dynasties subverted, and Europe overrun by a military despot with a rapidity which made men giddy to behold,—though the greater part of these convulsions have occurred in her domains, and though she has herself been the object of fierce attack,—still there she stands, as she stood before, like a huge and hoary castellated edifice, half of which has long since been laid in ruins by some furious attack—unrebuilt and unrepaired, yet still closely tenanted, even to the very attics that overhang the ruins, and in the vaults beneath them.

The Romish church still holds the half of Europe in the thraldom of ignorance and delusion, and has

long since fixed the teeth of her cruelty on far more than the half of America. While the Reformation was wrenching from her many of her hereditary domains in the Old World, she was gaining in the New a territory of more than treble extent, and taking fearful revenge for her loss on the unhappy aborigines of those regions; and over what she then gained she still retains unbroken power. It is, indeed, a fact of the most strange and grievous character, and one which should startle the Reformed churches in their slumbers, that Protestantism, or, what is yet of far more importance, vital and free Christianity, for the space of more than two hundred years, has gained not an inch from Romanism;—a fact this which, itself alone, carries full proof that there has been something seriously amiss among the Protestant communities; and yet most Protestants seem little, if at all, affected by it.

By what power shall the torpor of the Romish church be smitten into life? She has stood as if unmoved amid revolutions and convulsions of the most portentous character. Atheism has thundered at her gates, and yet she has not been roused. Light is diffused around her—is shed upon her—yet she "comprehendeth it not." What shall startle her? Events have fully shown that other influences and powers than those of this world are required for effecting this.—The sword of the Spirit, wielded by that Almighty Agent, and the light of the Sun of righteousness reflected in its glory by the true spiritual church on the distortions and loathsomeness of

the mystery of iniquity—a light whose glory is love. The Romish system is to be detested as worthy of all abhorrence, but its adherents, and those deluded by it, are not to be hated, nor to be treated as enemies, but as neighbours,—they are to be loved as ourselves. This is the duty of every Protestant, to which he is bound by the Divine law, and the dereliction of which involves not only deep injury to the church, but peril to his own soul.

The Romish system has proved fatally effective in debasing Christianity, but as a vehicle for its propagation it has entirely failed. Missions have, indeed, been undertaken by the Romish church without number, and means for conversion, or rather for proselytizing, she has adopted, of all sorts, without scruple; but what results of her labours appear? Where, on the map of the world, shall we find the provinces which she has gained even to nominal Christianity, if we except those which she has conquered by the sword, and colonized with her own sons? The weapons of her warfare are essentially of a carnal character, and therefore entirely alien from the weapons by which Christianity conquers, and of necessity unfitted to advance its cause.

We must therefore look to another quarter for an effective order of Christianity—for a development of the religion of Christ, adapted to be the instrument for regenerating the world. We must turn our eyes to the Protestant communities. And what is their condition? Though many of them have recently experienced decided improvements, and

though revivification is, we hope, commenced in all, most of them are still far from being in a condition fit for discharging the functions for which the church was constituted. They have all been cast in the mould of schism, and most of them still bear, in more or less distinct, or bold relief, its form and lineaments.

The two great divisions of Protestants on the Continent, the Lutheran church, and the Reformed, were from the first fearfully schismatic. No greater intolerance was ever manifested than they displayed towards each other. The antipathy which subsisted between the Jews and Samaritans was not more intense than that which subsisted between them. And though the virulence of their schismatic spirit abated as both diverged into heresy, it threatens to revive again when piety is reviving, especially in Prussia, where the Protestant communities have experienced the largest measure of revival, where schism is fomented by the ill-conceived and despotic measures of government. When we reflect on the condition into which the Protestant churches on the Continent had sunk—when we consider that till lately they were entirely overspread by heresy, and dead, with scarcely a symptom of life, it is matter of unspeakable rejoicing that there are now appearing among them all indications of returning spiritual animation. The neologic scepticism, cold, subtle, comfortless, and essentially alien to the human spirit, rightly informed and guided, is feeling the re-action of vital Christianity, harmonising in its

operations with the highest and most sacred principles in the original constitution of human nature. And let the religion of Christ but have full scope to operate, and let those who are Christians indeed, strengthen each other's hands, and, above all things, avoid whatever tends to produce or continue schism —that evil which proved so fatal to the churches in the days of their fathers. Let them exhibit to the Romanist, who smothers effective Christianity under superstitious rites, and meretricious decorations; and to the rationalist who, by his metaphysical apparatus, tortures out its very life, let them exhibit to these the religion of Christ, in a style in which they have never yet beheld it—pure, ardent, energetic; and ere long, under the Divine blessing, there may dawn on the Continent a brighter day than she has beheld since the era of the Reformation, yea, even than she has seen since the primitive ages. As yet the aspect of the Continental churches is brightened chiefly by hope, and it inspires delight the rather by appearing in contrast with the state in which they lately were; their present condition would be reckoned dismal, if they were not advancing from one far worse.

But we have yet to contemplate the church in her chosen and most favoured homes, where she appears in her greatest purity and glory, and puts forth her highest energies; from which she is sending out her agents to the very ends of the earth; and where she is aiming at nothing less than the moral transformation of the world—we have yet to review her con-

dition in Britain and America. And what is the aspect which she presents in these renowned nations? Previous to a knowledge of the circumstances of the case, one would expect that where the church puts forth the greatest measure of effective power, and exists in the greatest purity, there would be found the greatest unity among her various parts. But the church appears pure and energetic in these countries, only in contrast with the corruption and dormancy into which she is sunk in other parts of the world. Compared with what she must be ere her light can break forth effectively upon the world, and her power be felt in all lands, even her purest and most energetic sections are yet sullied and feeble. Besides, the purer that the church becomes, and the greater the energy of spiritual life within her, if she still maintain a polity inimical to Christian liberty, the more numerous will be her divisions. Nations, when possessed by deep religious delusions, and sunk in the apathy of ignorance and spiritual death, may submit to the exactions of ecclesiastical despotism, but assuredly they will not do so when supplied with knowledge, and quickened—though it be but partially—into spiritual life. Accordingly, in Britain and America, the church is divided into a greater number of sects than in any other country, for in these countries, while the people have long been partially enlightened and partially quickened into spiritual life, the church has, with mournfully little exception, maintained a polity incompatible with the enjoyment of spiritual liberty. Men have

too frequently broke away from the restraints of one phase of spiritual despotism, only to set up another, which in its turn has been productive of new schisms. And the Scriptural principles of church communion, which are in themselves so simple, and which stand out with such distinctness in the New Testament, have proved to be the very last which men will learn.

The established churches of Britain were erected in an age when true Christian liberty was unknown, and their constitution has remained unaltered—that of the Church of England since the time of Elizabeth, and that of the Church of Scotland since the period of the Commonwealth. Some of their intolerant principles have become obsolete, but they still continue to stain their standards; and both the constitution and administration of each of them continue to partake too much of a despotic and schismatic character. Among Dissenters, many Christian societies are now to be found which maintain principles of church communion, that allow a large measure of Christian liberty, and the non-conforming communities generally have, within the last half century, become far less schismatic and intolerant in regard to each other than they formerly were; but justice requires us to say that recently they appear to have become more so in regard to their brethren connected with the national church establishments. On the whole, if many little breaches in the Christian community in Britain have lately been closed up, it has been by the widening of one great breach; and

within the last few years the cause of Christian unity —a cause of such momentous consequence to the prosperity of the church, and the eternal interests of mankind—has suffered a severe and mournful reverse. And the Christian church presents to the world the melancholy and repulsive spectacle of a kingdom divided against itself by the bitterest hatred: its members treating each other as the worst of enemies, assailing one another with all sorts of calumny and abuse, and glorying, many of them, in whatever is calculated to bring dishonour or disgrace on their opponents.

By conventional consent Britain is regarded as a Christian nation. But the great majority of her inhabitants must be fatally deceived if they regard themselves as Christians indeed. Her national character is still anti-Christian—it is the character of the world, which is "enmity with God." This character, the church in all her sections, singly and collectively, has failed to transform; and she must fail to do this until her members become one—until she embody, and make to bear on unsanctified humanity the principle of love—until her members become known to all as the disciples of Jesus Christ, by the love which they manifest to one another. When this shall be the case, and not till then, may we expect her to exert a prevalent attractive influence on the world; then may we hope that the Gentiles will come to her light, and kings to the brightness of her rising.

But we must hasten on to take a hasty glance at

the condition of the church in the American Union. Seeing the same grounds of dissension do not exist there as in our country, all denominations being now on an equal footing—all unconnected with the civil government, we should be led to conclude that there the church would be less schismatic than in Britain; and in some of its sections at least this is the case. There obtains, for example, a delightful and exemplary fraternal communion between the Presbyterian and Congregational denominations, which is, we hope, the nucleus round which will yet be formed a general Christian federation, such as every catholic heart fails with longing to behold. Yet the church there in general is still too much the counterpart of the church among ourselves; there is not, we believe, a sect here which has not there its representative, exhibiting features that belie its parentage. So tenacious of life is sectarianism, that it will adapt itself to any soil; and like the thistle which the ground was cursed to produce on account of the sin of man, it flourishes in every clime.

The "pilgrim fathers" fled from under the spiritual despotism of the dominant churches in Britain to the forests of America, and there set up an image of that despotism fashioned according to their own device, commanding all to bow before it, thus denying to those under their government that freedom in the worship of God which they had expatriated themselves that they might enjoy. Such are the inconsistencies of man even in his best estate. Though there is no portion of the Union where the

civil power now maintains any sect in ecclesiastical domination, the mischievous influence of the schismatic constitution with which the American churches were originally planted has not yet ceased, nor do we see indications which would give ground to hope that it will soon terminate. Should not the directors of Christian missions be warned by the numerous and sad illustrations which are before their eyes of the evils resulting from planting churches of a schismatic character?

But slavery, with its concomitant evils, is the deepest stain on the American church. Slavery, as every one knows, exists in the Southern and Western States of the American Union in its most aggravated forms; and the church is deeply implicated in the guilt of its maintenance. Many not only of her members, but even of her ministers, are slave-holders, and strenuous advocates for the continuance of slavery, regarding their brethren who are opposed to it with bitter animosity, and not unfrequently denouncing their conduct, and abusing them in the most public and violent manner. Christians are fearfully alienated from each other, and are so respecting a matter, in regard to which all should be of one mind who are followers of Him who enjoined his disciples to do to others even as they would that others should do to them. Feelings the most inimical to the genius of Christianity have gained a melancholy ascendancy in the hearts of multitudes; railing and evil speaking are indulged in to an

alarming extent; and the Christian community is rent by schisms of the direst character.

Intimately connected with slavery is that intense antipathy towards the free people of colour which is so prevalent throughout the whole Union, and in the guilt of which also the church deeply shares. By Christians and ministers of the gospel these are despised, hated, calumniated, abused; shut out from respectable society, expelled from the house of God, or cooped up in enclosures by themselves, and even in some places forbidden to preach the gospel to their brethren; and all this cruel treatment proceeds from those who profess to be worshippers of Him, who "hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on the face of all the earth," and disciples of that Saviour who came to seek and save the lost of every colour and clime, who commanded his gospel to be preached to all, and whose inspired servant solemnly declared, that possessed of whatever endowments or virtues he might be, if destitute of love, he was nothing. Thus there is produced a schism of a strange and most baneful character—the schism of colour—peculiar, we believe, to the American Union. May it perish where it rose!

"Can the men who thus feel and act be Christians?" is a question put by many on this side the Atlantic; while many more seem gratified to find in the temper and conduct of American professors towards slaves and people of colour, evidence, as

they conceive, that they are not Christians, and that religion in the States of the American Union is in a wretched and declining condition. But ere Christian professors in this country pronounce judgment on their American brethren who are supporters of slavery, and who regard with antipathy Christians of colour, it becomes them to enquire whether they are regarding any of *their* brethren with disaffection, whether they are treating them harshly, or would feel inclined to do so if it were within their power; and if such be the case, whether they be not guilty of sins very much akin to those for which they would pronounce judgment upon others. It well becomes such, then, who put the question whether the Americans can be Christians, at the same time to enquire whether they are Christians, indeed, themselves. Many of our American brethren are indulging an order of feeling fearfully repugnant to the spirit of Christianity, and supporting a system most inimical to its genius, who yet exhibit evidence in other respects of being disciples of Christ. But let us not forget that "with us, even with us too, there are sins against the Lord our God." An order of feeling, and a course of conduct of very similar character, prevail extensively among us. If many religious professors in America indulge antipathy towards their coloured brethren, many among us indulge in feelings equally unchristian towards their brethren connected with the Dissenting communions, or with the Church Establishment, as the case may be. If we are disposed to congratulate ourselves on account of our

superiority over them in Christian attainment, there is reason to fear that we are but very imperfectly acquainted with the evils of our own temper and conduct—that we "behold the mote that is in our brother's eye, but consider not the beam that is in our own eye." But we would be anticipating the subject of the next section by entering here on the consideration of the spirit displayed by Christian professors in Britain.

But besides these considerations, it becomes Britain to speak on this subject with the humility of a repentant criminal. But recent is the hour in which she rid her hands from the scourge and the chain,—if indeed she can yet be said to have done so.* And though the Christians of Britain were not chargeable with contributing to the continuance of slavery in any such measure as are the Christians of America, they having for the most part long and faithfully remonstrated against it; yet it ought to be remembered, that they were placed in circumstances widely different, and far less trying. It is an easy matter to perceive aright the guilt and evils of a system which obtains on the opposite side of the globe, and in which we are no way personally interested, from what it is to perceive the guilt and evils of one which we are interested in upholding, which we have beheld in operation, and acted our part under, daily from our infancy. Are we then disposed to palliate

* The intelligent reader will perceive, that the writer here alludes to the cruelties yet practised on the Negroes, under the apprenticeship system, in the British West India Colonies.

American slavery, or to justify its supporters? Far otherwise. We regard American slavery, as in many of its features, and in the circumstances in which it exists, as hateful without a precedent and without a parallel, and its supporters as fearfully guilty, especially those who are continuing such after its aggravated evils have been revealed in light around them. We conceive, that while in isolated cases equal cruelties may have been perpetrated by irresponsible despots, it has remained for those who boast that they are the freest people under heaven, to authenticate such cruelties in the form and with the sanctions of public laws. And could our feeble voice be heard beyond the waters of the broad Atlantic, we would not be backward to raise it along with the voices of our Christian brethren in solemn warning to the Christians of America, who are engaged in supporting such a system,—in solemn warning of the fearful perilousness of their course. Affectionately and earnestly would we adjure every citizen of the Union, who would retain the character of a Christian in this world, or aspire to the inheritance of a Christian in the world to come, fairly to try the matter by the distinctive spirit of Christianity; and doing so, his decision, we are confident, could not be doubtful nor long delayed. And right principles, thus ingenuously and anxiously sought, and firmly held when obtained, would generate a moral energy, before which debauched and enervated tyranny must shortly quail. Then let all who have taken the right side—the side of humanity and true Christian principle—

be careful to speak and act in a Christian spirit. Let them vindicate the cause of the oppressed as becometh disciples of Christ,—at once with unyielding firmness, and with meekness, forbearance, and love, —confident that Jehovah will support them, and make them ultimately to prevail. " For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the Lord ; I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him."

Thus have we glanced hastily at the present aspect of the visible church ; and dismal and disheartening for the most part have we found it. Where she is not smothered by corruption, or turned aside from the faith, she is for the most part distracted or torn by one or other of the many phases of schism. Even in Britain and America, where she possesses incomparably the greatest measure of vital energy, her power is greatly paralyzed, and her influence obstructed, by her multiplied divisions, and by the schismatic spirit which so fearfully prevails within her. In both these countries she has hitherto failed to transform the larger number of the inhabitants, the character of whom, whatever they may profess, continues identified with the character of " the world which lieth in wickedness." Yet there is one redeeming feature in the condition of the Church in our times, which we would not overlook,—a feature inseparable from Christian prosperity,—and which she exhibits now almost in every quarter where there is life within her,—we mean combined effort for the

conversion of the world. The efforts of the Church in this respect are no doubt feeble and limited compared with what they ought to be; yet, such as they are, they inspire joy and hope. And were the measure of zeal that actuates us for the evangelization of the nations, such as it is, combined with an equal measure of love, we would no doubt soon see results which would fill our hearts with wonder and rejoicing. Were the members of the Church, while faithful to their trust in communicating the glad tidings of salvation "to all people," faithful also to one another in the sympathies of Christian brotherhood, gloriously expansive and extendingly triumphant, in the power of her Divine head, she would soon make every form of evil to succumb beneath her. From her violation or neglect of Divine injunctions have sprung most of those evils which have cramped her energies and contaminated her purity; and well might Jehovah address her as he did his people of old, "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself." Would that she might now, even at the last, fully avail herself of that most merciful and cheering declaration, "In me is thine help;" and that she would hear and obey the compassionate entreaty, "O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously; so will we render the calves of our lips. Ashur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses; neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods;" then might we hope

to see the realization of those glorious and delightful promises, " I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely; for mine anger is turned away from him. I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive-tree, and his smell as Lebanon. They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon. Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?"

SECTION II.

INTERNAL CONDITION OF THE CHURCH IN BRITAIN, OR THE SPIRIT DISPLAYED BY BRITISH CHRISTIANS COMPARED WITH THE SPIRIT DISPLAYED BY CHRIST AND HIS APOSTLES.

In the preceding section we have taken a hasty survey of the Church in her external features wherever she exists—we have roamed over the world; but we are now to confine ourselves to a narrower field, and to endeavour to make a closer inspection, in order, if possible, to ascertain the most prominent features of the internal condition of the church as she exists among ourselves—at least such of these as have a bearing on the subject of this essay; and how far these features are in harmony with the genius of Christianity, and how far inimical to it.

When we contemplate the melancholy condition in which the Church existed in the days of our fathers—her different sections persecuting each other even to death when they could obtain power to do so;—or, as in a subsequent age, spending their

strength in vain wranglings, regardless of the condition of the world—a world still unsaved, although for its salvation "all things were ready"—and regardless of the Redeemer's last commandment; we are apt to look upon ourselves with no small measure of complacency as we review the points of our own superiority. But in thus comparing ourselves with those that have gone before us, and judging of our attainments and virtues by their character, we "are not wise;" for while the character of our predecessors is not the pattern which we are commanded to imitate, or is so only in so far as it coincides with the high pattern furnished by Christ—it is far less the standard by which we shall be judged. Let us bring our character into comparison with that of Him who has left "us an example that we should follow his steps," and with that of his inspired servants who were imitators of him, and who had imbibed his spirit, ever impressed with the solemn declaration, that "if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his." If the church in Britain would contemplate her present character in comparison with, and under the light of the character of her Lord, and that of his chosen messengers, she could not fail to perceive in herself a fearful lack of the distinctive spirit of Christ, and an alarming measure of a spirit which he has emphatically condemned.

The essence of the spirit which actuated our Lord Jesus Christ was compassionate love. Of this his assumption of our nature that he might redeem us,

was at once the astonishing result, and the illustrious manifestation. The dismal spiritual condition of his "brethren according to the flesh"—the chosen people of Jehovah—stirred the deepest commiseration in his heart—a commiseration which the most pathetic language, though accompanied with tears, could not adequately express. "When he beheld the city"—which should have been the central abode of righteousness, purity, and peace, the perfection of moral beauty, "the joy of the whole earth," and the emblem of heaven—torn with factions, sunk in hypocrisy and guilt, buried under an incrustation of formality, smitten with a spiritual insensibility, which even the manifestations of such a love as his could not quicken, on the very brink of destruction —a destruction the type of whatever is tremendous in this world, or in the world to come;—"when he beheld the city he wept over it"—over it in its final impenitence and irremediable doom, saying, "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things that belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes."—"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them who are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" A like commiseration for his brethren filled the heart of the Apostle Paul, and prompted him to exclaim, "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and con-

tinual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh."

The spiritual condition of the great majority of our countrymen is scarcely, if at all, less deplorable than was that of the Jews at the period when Christ appeared on the earth. Myriads of them are sunk in the most appalling vice and wretchedness—myriads are living in pleasure, dead while they live—myriads rivetted to the world, too likely never to be loosed from it till death tear them away—myriads hardened under the gospel, "going down to the grave with a lie in their right hand," saying to themselves, "Peace, peace, when there is no peace." To the great majority of our countrymen "the things that belong to their peace are hid from their eyes," and unless some signal and sudden change take place in our spiritual condition and character, they will continue so for ever. How are we affected by such fearful facts as these? Alas! has it not become almost habitual for us to behold our countrymen in this fearful condition without being affected at all? Yea, are we not often insensible to the awful fact that they *are* in such a condition? O how little are we moved by the appalling spiritual state and eternal prospects of those among whom we dwell! Our fellow citizens, our neighbours, the inmates of our houses, the children that are dear to us, and the wives of our bosoms, are hastening on to perdition, and we regard it not. Our hearts are harrowed up by a tale of suffering or woe from the remotest part of the earth, our sym-

pathies have snapped asunder the manacles of the slave, and we commiserate those who are in bondage wherever they may be found; but how little are we affected by sufferings which know no measure and no end; or by a slavery, the bonds of which, if not broken soon, must gall for ever! How sadly are we behind our Master in commiseration for the souls that are perishing around us!

If we were roused fairly from our insensibility in regard to the spiritual condition of our neighbours, we would be prompted to enquire, what it is which so fearfully neutralizes our influence as Christians on the world around us—an enquiry than which none can more urgently demand the attention of individual believers, of churches, and of the whole Christian community. Christ declared his disciples to be "the light of the world," and he commanded them to "let their light so shine before men, that they might see their good works, and glorify their Father who is in heaven." Does not the spiritual condition of the world around us furnish fearful evidence that our light does not so shine? Christians are also declared to be "the salt of the earth," which is to preserve it from sinking into moral putrefaction. Is there not the most melancholy proof that in our case, to an alarming degree, "the salt has lost its savour?"

Within the last fifty years knowledge has been greatly diffused, an abundant and ever increasing religious literature has spread over the country to an unprecedented extent, almost all our countrymen have been supplied with the sacred Scriptures, vast

numbers of the young have been receiving religious instruction, the gospel has been preached faithfully in many places where formerly another gospel was preached; and yet impiety and wickedness awfully prevail, and in many places, it is to be feared, are increasing. Loud complaints concerning the moral deterioration of the people are heard on every hand. Christian men have been startled and alarmed when their eyes have been opened to the dense and cumulative masses of appalling wickedness and wretchedness which abound in our cities; and little reason is there to think that on the whole the moral and religious condition of the country is better than that of the towns; in the country evil is more diffused, it does not present itself to our view in such masses, and therefore it has not such an appalling and revolting aspect; but whoever shall conclude that its amount is less compared with the population, will, we are afraid, conclude hastily without due knowledge of, and attention to facts. We are far from intending to deny that within the last fifty years considerable improvement has taken place among us in reference to religion; piety has increased and spread, and assumed at least something of its proper activity and energy. But when we consider that within the same period the population has been doubled, the increase of piety will not appear relatively so great as we are accustomed to regard it. And if we compare the progress of religion with the wide and unprecedented diffusion of general knowledge during the same period, we will find yet far

less reason for congratulation and rejoicing. If in our days Christians have increased in numbers, and been more active and energetic in the performance of their peculiar duties than in the days of our fathers; the wicked, many of them at least, have become more wicked, more hardened, more audacious, more debased. These melancholy facts demand our most solemn consideration. We have not been operating as the salt of the earth, we have not preserved our neighbours from sinking into moral putrefaction, and it greatly concerns us to enquire into the causes of this; it concerns every one carefully to examine his own character and conduct, in order to see what it is in these which neutralizes that antiseptic influence which they ought to exert on surrounding humanity; and likewise to enquire what it is in the prevailing character of the church which so fearfully neutralizes this influence in her. An impartial and serious examination of these things, conducted under enlightened views of what Christian character and the character of the church ought to be, would, we have no doubt, lead to the conclusion, that, among the main causes of this melancholy neutralization of Christian influence are the schismatic state of the church, and the schismatic spirit displayed by so many of her members, for than these nothing can be more opposed to the injunctions of Christ, and the spirit of Christianity.

But the commiseration of our Lord for his countrymen derived its peculiar intensity from their being the chosen people of God—his only church then

existing on earth. They were those whom he had selected for fulfilling purposes of a peculiar character, and of the highest importance in the economy of his grace towards a lost world. But for fulfilling these purposes they had become entirely unfit, and this it was which gave such keenness to his anguish. He beheld that they were lost, that the jaws of destruction were already open to receive them—that from irremediable ruin they could not be rescued; yet it was with infinite reluctance that he would leave them to it. "O that my people had hearkened to my voice, I should soon have subdued their enemies."—"How shall I give thee up, Israel?" So also was it with the Apostle Paul. Those for whose salvation he felt such an intense desire—that he would have submitted to infinitely the most fearful of all evils for their sakes, could his doing so have been of any avail—were "Israelites; to whom pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises." Then, again, such was his interest in the condition of the Christian churches, that his very life was, as it were, bound up with their prosperity: "Now we live," says he to one of them, "if ye stand fast in the Lord;" and to the members of another, "Ye are in our hearts to die and to live with you." Then, again, in regard to his Christian brethren, he says, "Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not?" And what could exceed the interest which the seraphic John felt in the prosperity of the churches,

as manifested in his Epistles? He could say from the depths of his soul, " I have no greater joy than to hear that thy children walk in truth." And his sorrow would have been correspondingly deep to have heard that they did not so walk. It would have been like that produced in the heart of his brother Paul, by beholding professors of the gospel pursuing sinful courses. " Many walk, of whom I have told you before, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ."

But we have not been deeply humbled, nor do we mourn on account of the guilt of the church, nor on account of the degradation which she now suffers—which she has suffered so long. We can look on her without emotion, though she lies in the dust, torn and defiled, divested of her glory, and shorn of her strength. Nor is this the worst. We—many of us—are wounding her afresh, and even glorying in her shame. We have not, as would have well become us, descended into the valley of humiliation because of the sins of the church, weeping as we went. Few of us, it is to be feared, feel as the prophet felt in regard to the sins of his people, and the miseries they were bringing on them, when he exclaimed, " O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people." Few, we fear, would be found in the church in our land, worthy to have " a mark set upon their foreheads,"

because they " sigh and cry for the abominations that are done" among us.

The temper of Christ was tenderness itself. It was predicted of him, that he should " feed his flock like a shepherd—gather the lambs with his arm—carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that were with young." And when he appeared, his conduct fully justified the beautiful figurative representation of the prophet. Think with what tenderness he invited to the enjoyment of the fulness of his love, the oppressed and the weary—" Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Think of his tender concern for his disciples manifested on so many occasions, but especially in his address to them, and prayer for them before he suffered. And his was a tenderness which even contempt and malignity could not indurate, for over his very murderers his heart yearned. And his inspired servants were nobly distinguished by a like tenderness of spirit. Proofs of this are conspicuous on every page of their writings. To those among whom they laboured, they could thus confidently appeal, " yourselves brethren know" that " we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children. So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also

our own souls, because ye were dear unto us. . . . Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily, and justly, and unblameably, we behaved ourselves among you that believe." And their injunctions to all were to have "compassion one of another," to "love as brethren," to "be pitiful" and "courteous"— to be "tender hearted, forbearing, and forgiving one another in love."

Now in our treatment of one another as members of different communions, there is every thing the reverse of tenderness. We magnify the faults of each other, and delight to find them. Had the injunctions of the Divine Spirit been, not to "put away," but to cherish and indulge in "all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and all evil speaking," the temper and conduct of many religionists in our times would have needed no alteration to have been in full harmony with them. Under the boasted light of this nineteenth century, we are manifesting all the sectarian animosity and virulence of the seventeenth; the voice of the peaceable is drowned amid the obstreperous contentions of hostile factions; and the spirit of schismatic rancour which was wont to appear chiefly in fitful and local outbursts, is now embodied in a regular organization, and sends forth over the land its hebdomadal, and monthly ebullitions. Religion is deeply wounded in the house of its friends, while its enemies are looking on with evident delight and triumph, saying among themselves, "Ah! we would have it thus," and lending their aid to augment the strife. Our forefathers, the Re-

formers, entirely misapprehended the proper basis of Christian unity, as well as the true nature of Christian liberty; but no such excuses can be pled for us. We know our Lord's will, and yet act contrary to it; how can we expect but to be "beaten with many stripes?"

It is a melancholy result of the moral condition of our nature, that impediments are thrown in the way of effective Christianity, by the imperfections and unintentional errors of even its most devoted adherents. But it is consolatory to think, that, in such cases, the Divine Spirit is not provoked to withdraw his quickening and renovating influence. But how must he be grieved and repelled by indulgence in a spirit, and by the deliberate use of weapons, which he has emphatically condemned! And when the leaders of religious communities systematically violate the most explicit and solemn injunctions of Scripture, how can they expect to retain the blessing, or avert the punitive inflictions of heaven? Were it not that even good men are fearfully blind to the errors in temper and conduct, which prevail, either in themselves, or in the party with which they are connected, all sincere Christians would be appalled at the fearful contrast between the spirit displayed in the great controversy of the times and the distinctive spirit of Christianity.

"God is love;" and it is the end of Christianity to restore man to his image. The progress, therefore, of any individual or community in Christian attainments, may be measured by the measure of love

which such individual or community manifests—not by any degree of knowledge, or any power of utterance on sacred subjects; for an inspired apostle has declared, " Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge, . . . and have not charity, I am nothing."—Not even by the greatest liberality towards the poor, nor by the most self-denying zeal; for he adds, " Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." And all this is in beautiful harmony with those parts of Scripture, in which love is exhibited to us as the essence of acceptable obedience —as indeed " the fulfilling of the law." What rank then would the majority of the Christians in Britain take in the community of the faithful—in the kingdom of heaven—if tried by this criterion? Is there not strong reason to conclude, from the spirit which we display, that we would rank among the " least" —among the very " babes?"

To suffer for Christ, his disciples esteemed a privilege of the highest order. " To you it is given," says Paul to the Philippians, " on the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake." And we find this same apostle and his companion making the dungeon of their confinement to resound with praise, even during the gloomy hours of night, and with their feet fast in the stocks;

and Peter and John, after having been beaten, "departed," we are told, "from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name." We are called upon to suffer little for Christ, at least we *do* suffer little for him; but from our temper under any suffering of this sort which we may endure, have we reason to conclude that we would regard sufferings like theirs as they regarded them? Do we rejoice if we are counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Christ? Do we so love and honour him as to regard it as an exalted privilege "to suffer for his sake?"

The Apostle of the Gentiles, while with great promptitude and boldness he demanded his rights and immunities as a Roman citizen, murmured not when he was deprived of these; and so far was he from murmuring at the loss of worldly property, that "he counted all things but loss for Christ, for whom he had suffered the loss of all things." The primitive Christians "took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing in themselves that they had in heaven a better and an enduring substance." But if there is any semblance of interference with our property, we are irritated and alarmed. Little will we endure, ere loud and bitter complaints be heard. When we manifest such alarm and animosity, when our possessions are touched, how would we behave under the sword, or in the fires of persecution? If we writhe and rage if our skin is but pricked, how would we deport ourselves should the iron enter our souls?

During the time of our Lord's personal ministry

on earth, there was a class of men "who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others." Now it might not be unprofitable for Christians of every communion to enquire whether this be not very much our denominational character, seeing each party is so loud in praise of its distinctive principles, and modes of worship and government, and in bitter condemnation of the principles and forms of others.

The temper of the apostles became more refined, and bland, and etherial, the nearer they approached the termination of their course. The fervour of their spirit was mellowed and softened, like the beams of the sun as he descends towards the happy isles of his rest. Witness the Epistles of Peter, and the Epistle of Paul to Philemon, with his Second Epistle to Timothy, which seem as if written from the neighbourhood of heaven—from the very precincts of the celestial city—under its intensely pure, yet inexpressibly mild and delicious light. The storms of life, (and what in the shape of trials or hardships have any of us endured ever to be mentioned along with theirs?) far from ruffling or exacerbating the temper of their minds, had only worn off its asperities, and purified it from whatever is earthly and sinful. Is our temper undergoing this softening and refining process, and thus preparing for the ethereal atmosphere of heaven? Alas! we are compelled to record it as our melancholy conviction, that with many the case seems to be directly the reverse. We are compelled to record it, as the result of our observation, that

many even occupying official stations, and who seemed to be pillars in the church, appear within these few years to have come into an habitual state of feeling fearfully at variance with the spirit of Christianity, and unspeakably perilous to the souls of such as indulge it. Many, we deeply regret to say it, can scarcely appear in public in any capacity without calumniating and abusing their brethren who differ from them on questions of church polity. "O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things!" How are those who indulge in such a spirit preparing for the exercises and enjoyments of heaven? What agreement is there between their temper and the glowing love which ever fills the spirits of the blessed there? If we cannot meet with our brethren on earth, if we turn away our eyes from them, if we never speak of them but with bitterness or scorn; how are we to sit down with them in the kingdom of our Father? How are we to join our voices with theirs, in ascribing "blessing, and glory, and honour, and power, unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever?"

Solemn and deeply affecting is it to contemplate the melancholy contrast presented to us at so many points between the prevalent spirit of Christian professors in our age, and the spirit maintained and manifested by Christ and by his disciples in primitive times—solemn and deeply affecting, we say, is the contemplation of this, in connection with the unqualified declaration of the Spirit of truth: "If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of

his." All who possess not the temper of mind which distinguished the Son of man, whatever professions they may have made of zeal for the glory or the truth of God, will be disowned by him at last —will meet with that fearful repulse from the August Occupant of the throne of final judgment, "I know you not, depart from me." And who shall conceive of their anguish who have been driven back from the very gates of the celestial city, after having caught glimpses of its glory, and deemed themselves secure of its happiness? What shall be the gnawing of remorse, that "worm that dieth not," in them? Yet such shall be the doom of every unrepenting hater of the brethren; for the final home of hatred is hell, in which it shall soon be imprisoned, never again to disturb the harmony and happiness of Jehovah's creation. O that Christian professors in our times, who manifest so much sectarian zeal, would lay to heart these things!

SECTION III.

SPECIAL DUTIES OF THE CHURCH, ARISING OUT OF HER EXISTING CONDITION.

SPECIAL situations demand special duties of those who are placed in them, whether it be individuals or communities. Had the church ere now attained the meridian of her millennial purity and glory, embracing in her bosom the entire family of man, the duties devolving on her would have been few and light, compared with those devolving on her in her present state. Had she even, with no wider domains than those which she at present nominally possesses, been wherever existing, uncorrupted, united, and energetic, still the duties demanded of her would have been comparatively easy and grateful; and we should have been saved the task which we have now to undertake.

In the hasty glance which we have taken at the existing condition of the church, we have found by far the greater part of her apostate and grossly corrupted, heretical, or spiritually dead; while those sections that are characterized by a measure of life

and purity, are still fearfully weakened and disfigured by schism; some of them still retaining that exclusive constitution which they received in an age when Christian liberty was to most men unknown, and all more or less tainted with a schismatic spirit —a spirit which special circumstances have of late contributed to excite to peculiar virulence. And now, what is to be done? Is the church to be allowed to remain in this disastrous condition, and souls to perish, and the world to continue unsaved, and Satan to triumph, and Christ to be held back from taking possession of his kingdom? Every rightly constituted mind will be ready to exclaim, No, thus it must not be: but the question returns, What then is to be done? How is the church to be exorcised of the demon of discord? How are her divisions to be healed? How is she to be filled, in every member, with the principle of love, that she may advance upon the nations, "conquering and to conquer?" These are questions of the most momentous character—questions demanding the closest and most solemn attention of every one who feels an interest in the prosperity of the church, and in the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom; and the prayer of the writer is, that in the suggestions he is about to offer, he may have the guidance of the Spirit of truth and love, and his earnest desire is, that the reader may implore and obtain the same sure direction.

Every right thinking Christian will agree that measures of church reform will be of little value—will

contribute little towards bringing any Christian community nearer to a conformity with the constitution and character of a scriptural church, unless originated and sustained by an enhancement of piety in the community, which is the subject of the reforming process. One of the great and primary evils of schism we have found to be its pernicious influence on personal piety. It tends greatly to unfit the soul for vivifying and delightful communion with God. Then, by a reflex influence, the feebleness of spiritual life, and the obscurity and doubtfulness of Christian character, which must result from such unfitness, productive of such privation, contribute fearfully to perpetuate schism. The influence of a schismatic spirit in depriving the soul of communion with God, clearly evinces that it is heinously sinful, for it is only sin that can deprive the soul of this communion. "Your iniquities," says the prophet, "have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." Moral reformation, whether of individuals or communities, necessarily implies that such as require it have been guilty of sin; and such reformation must always commence in a proper apprehension of the sin committed, with deep humiliation on account of it, and confession before God; and must lead to strenuous endeavours to avoid the sin, and fervent prayer for strength to resist temptations to it. The children of Israel often forsook the service and worship of God, diverging into idolatry, and then they were left by him in the hands of their

enemies; but whenever they humbled themselves on account of their sins, making confession of them, and imploring forgiveness, God visited them in mercy, delivered them out of trouble, caused them to triumph over their enemies, and gave them peace and abundance in the goodly land of their possession. And in like cases we find a like course prescribed and exemplified in the New Testament. Paul reproved the Corinthians for having been puffed up, and not having mourned on account of sin that was allowed among them. And when, by the Divine blessing on his injunctions and remonstrances, they were led to humble themselves and mourn for their sins, we find him thus addressing them:—"Now I rejoice not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance; for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of." Then he specifies the many happy effects resulting from this sorrow. "For, behold, this self-same thing that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge!" In the Apocalyptic Epistle to the angel of the church of Ephesus, that church is charged with having left her first love, and the injunctions given to her in reference to this by "Him who holdeth the seven stars in his right hand," are, "Remember from

whence thou art fallen and repent, and do the first works, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent." Similar injunctions, enforced by like threatenings, we find given to other of the seven churches.

The church in our times, it is to be feared, has left her first love to God—manifestly she has left her first love to the brethren; she is guilty to an alarming extent of the sin of schism—of the heinous sin of hatred of the brethren. Though we say, "If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets;" is there not reason to fear that, by our hatred and hostility towards one another, we are proving ourselves to be "the children of them that killed the prophets?" The first duty which our character and condition obviously demand, is deep humiliation before God on account of our sins, accompanied with hearty confession of them to him, and earnest prayer for forgiveness. And if we do not perceive in our case special reason for taking such a course, there is yet greater cause for abasement and sorrow, as well as urgent reason that we should be alarmed when we exhibit such symptoms of that fearful spiritual condition—that induration of the soul—which is symbolized in Scripture by having eyes, yet seeing not, and having ears, but hearing not. The mournful prevalence of a schismatic spirit, its fearful evils, and deceptive character, urgently demand that we should keep vigilant,

guard at the portals of our hearts, and frequently subject them to rigid scrutiny, lest this spirit should find admittance, or lurk there under some of its specious disguises. And if we are at all aware of being in great measure insensible to its sinfulness and evils, this demands—with a voice urgent as our eternal destiny—that we should implore divine quickening, and strive by every means to be aroused from an insensibility so fearfully akin to spiritual death. If, "for the divisions of Reuben" in the days of Deborah, there were among the tribes of the Lord "great searchings of heart," should there not much more be searchings of heart among us for our divisions—divisions which involve consequences so disastrous to ourselves, to the whole church, and to the world? Let not the members of any communion, however scriptural they may reckon its constitution, however pure its administration, or however holy and apostolical its character, think that they will be absolved entirely from the guilt of the church in continuing schismatic, unless they have ever avoided every thing calculated to alienate the hearts of their brethren from them or from one another, unless they have done every thing in their power for healing the divisions of the church, unless they have habitually joined with a fervour not to be exceeded in the prayer of Christ for his people, that they all might be one, and unless they have ever walked on the earth attired in the bright robes of a divine charity—their character presenting to all the most attractive aspect. And even though it were

possible for any to have reached such a height of Christian attainment, still it would become them to be humbled on account of the sins of their brethren, and to mourn for the desolation of Zion. The evangelical prophet—a man who appears to us in distinguished elevation of character—when he beheld the august and awful symbols of the divine glory, uttered the heavy exclamation, "Woe is me!" not only because he was conscious of being "a man of unclean lips," but also "because" he dwelt "among a people of unclean lips." Few of us, it is to be presumed, will regard ourselves as less implicated in the guilt of the church than Jeremiah was in the guilt of his people; yet he was deeply humbled, and indulged in the bitterest sorrow on account of it. "Mine heart within me is broken because of the prophets, all my bones shake. I am like a drunken man, and like a man whom wine hath overcome, because of the Lord, and because of the words of his holiness. For the land is full of adulterers; for because of swearing the land mourneth; the pleasant places of the wilderness are dried up, and their course is evil, and their force is not right. For both prophet and priest are profane, yea, in mine house have I found their wickedness, saith the Lord." To these examples might be added that of the Apostle Paul, whom the sins of Christians and churches filled with such distress and sorrow, and who commiserated so deeply his "brethren according to the flesh," when sunk in unpardoned guilt and incurable impenitence; and in

regard to sorrow for sin, even that of our Lord himself, who, though existing in sinless perfection amid sinful men, was pierced with inexpressible keenness of anguish, on account of the fearful guilt and impending ruin of Jerusalem. But besides the force of such examples, acquaintance with human character will teach us, that if, in such exercises, the humblest and holiest do not lead the way, others cannot be expected to take a course so ungrateful to the pride of our nature—a course especially distasteful to the prevalent spirit of our times.

When we have humbled ourselves on account of our sins, confessed them to God, and implored forgiveness, the next step in religious reformation—a step that must be immediately taken—is to forsake them. "He that confesseth and forsaketh" his sins "shall obtain mercy." Let the churches and Christians of Britain, then, confess this their sin and forsake it—the sin of disaffection and hostility towards each other, and then may they hope to find mercy; then may they hope that "God will be merciful unto them, and bless them, and cause his face to shine upon them." And when the light of His countenance shall be revealed, by the clouds of sin being cleared away which hid it, the church shall be brightened up with an unwonted glory, and made to radiate a quickening and purifying light on the dark masses of humanity which surround her. Then the children of God, being revealed in light, shall stand out in glorious contrast to surrounding darkness, and shall no longer appear doubtful to each other, nor regard

each other with suspicious disaffection; while amid that penetrating radiance the cloak of the hypocrite shall fail to conceal the blackness and pollution which lurk beneath it. Then shall the separation of the sanctified from the unholy become to the church an easy task—a task, in fact, virtually done to her hand. An enhancement of piety would contribute above all things to the separation of the church from the world.

In our present condition, our disaffection towards each other contributes greatly to deaden our perceptions of the glory of our Redeemer. We do not "with open face behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord," and are not "changed into the same image from glory to glory." Our spirit being so sadly at variance with His, we value not at all, as we ought, his transcendent excellencies, and love him not at all as we ought to love him; for persons love those who resemble them in tastes, dispositions, and aims—they are kindred elements that unite and blend. Then, resembling and loving him so little, we take little pleasure in intercourse with him—we feel little desire to enjoy communion with him, and thus we continue imperfectly acquainted with his character and his will, and consequently must continue to yield him but a very defective obedience. Thus, there springs from our alienation of spirit from his, in regard to our brethren, a circle of evils, which, firmly concatenated, support, aggravate, and perpetuate each other. On the other hand, the more that we imbibe of the spirit of Christ—the spirit of forbearing and compassionate

love—the more will the feelings of our hearts harmonize with his; and, in proportion as they do so, the more our love to him will increase; and as love increases, we will desire the more intercourse and communion with him, and the enjoyment of these will in turn tend greatly to increase our knowledge in regard to all Divine things; for we could not have frequent intercourse with an intelligent individual of our own species without gaining great accessions to our knowledge. How much more then shall we gain in this respect by daily intercourse with "the only wise God!" Then, the knowledge of all Christians will possess the greater identity the more that in each it is increased and extended, and speculative differences will proportionately diminish, for it is owing to the limitation and imperfection of our knowledge that we entertain conflicting opinions. Errors will be corrected, misconceptions will vanish, and we will regard and esteem each other as we ought; —beholding in each other the bright and lovely image of him who is "fairer than the sons of men," we will love one another "with pure hearts fervently." For why is it that there is so little love among us now, but because the lineaments of the Divine image are in most of us so faint! A man of peculiarly pure and elevated character commands the admiration and wins the hearts of all who are not dead to every Christian feeling. In the presence of such a man the profane are struck with awe, and the unholy hand raised to assail him falls back paralyzed. An odour of sanctity is diffused around him wherever he goes; his "gar-

ments smell of myrrh," and of the incense of that inner sanctuary in which he dwells. " In time of trouble," such are hid by God " in the secret of his tabernacle,"—they are kept " secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues."

In the present state of the Christian community, many may conceive that even real Christians differ so widely from each other, that it is in vain to hope they could be brought to unite. But, if we duly consider the matter, we will find that it is not difference of opinion that keeps Christians asunder so much as alienation of heart. Let love once obtain its proper place and influence in the heart, and contested matters would soon assume a very different aspect. Our disregard and violation of those parts of the Divine law which are plain and peremptory, fearfully contributes to increase our differences regarding matters which are involved in obscurity. When we act contrary to the will of God, in matters regarding which that will is delivered in terms so unequivocal, and blazoned in characters so conspicuous, that " he may run who readeth," in matters respecting which we have " line upon line, and precept upon precept," how can we expect that our views or our conduct will be in harmony with those parts of Christian doctrine and law, which are more intricate and obscure? It is contrary to the established order of the moral economy, that those who disregard the known will of God should be conducted either to the heights or depths of Divine knowledge. Such exalted privileges are reserved for the

obedient. " None of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand." " If any man will do my will," is the declaration of Christ, " he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." Let us be careful to obey those Divine injunctions which are explicit and peremptory, and a strange and unwonted light will break in on such as are now variously regarded. Let us cultivate communion with God by the study of his word, combined with devout meditation and prayer. Forsaking the " broken cisterns" of earthly enjoyment, let us come to the fountain of love, that our hearts may be filled. Let us cherish love to Christ by obeying his commandments. Let us meditate on the manifestations of his love to us. Let us cherish in our hearts the remembrance of him. Let us think on our obligations to such a benefactor—on our obligation to obey his commandments. Let us consider whether the injuries which any of our brethren may have done to us can bear any, the least proportion, to the injuries which we have done to him; and yet he has continued to offer us forgiveness, and to prevent us by mercies. Let us farther reflect, that we may, in some respects, have deserved evil at their hands, while he has deserved infinitely the reverse at ours. Considering " Him who endureth such contradiction of sinners against himself,"—imitators of " the meekness and gentleness of Christ,"—let us adorn ourselves with " the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." " The meek will he guide in judgment, the meek will he teach his way."

Let us " walk in love as Christ also hath loved us," putting on " as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another." Let us " put away all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and all evil-speaking, with all malice." And then, in regard to less obvious matters, our " light" will " rise in obscurity," and every heart, glowing with love to God and all his children, barriers will melt away from between us, like wax amid surrounding fires.

Moreover, when we shall have seen much in our hearts needing correction and amendment, we will naturally be led to reflect, that there may be much also requiring these in ecclesiastical institutions which have harmonized with such hearts. Then will we be prepared, and disposed fairly to examine the constitutions of our churches; and wherever we find it necessary, we will hasten to the work of ecclesiastical reform. And when we shall all be inspired by love to Christ and to one another, that will become an easy task;—or, if in any respect difficult, the difficulty will not arise from the views or temper of real Christians, but from the presence of worldly men in the Church,—from her connection with the world,—a connection that has long distracted and divided her,—a connection which must be severed ere she can unite, " arise" and " shine." But nothing, as we have already seen, would contribute so much to facilitate the separation of the Church from the world, as an enhancement, in all real Christians, of the ele-

ments of Christian character; for this would produce a real separation, obvious to all, between the disciples of Christ and the votaries of mammon and of pleasure,—a separation in temper and tastes, in aim and efforts,—a separation, indeed, which, if wanting, any ecclesiastical separation is impracticable and vain.

If it is the imperative and immediate duty of every Christian to correct whatever is improper and inimical to the spirit of Christianity, in his temper and conduct, with respect to his brethren, it is not less the duty of every Christian community to correct, without delay, whatever is faulty—whatever tends to obstruct the union of all real Christians, in its constitution or administration. That the various sections of the church may be ill prepared for such a duty, or greatly disinclined to it, cannot be sustained as valid excuses, any more than they could be sustained as such on behalf of individuals failing to perform the duties devolving upon them. If there are any Christian communities ill prepared for entering upon the work of ecclesiastical reform, or greatly disinclined to it, when are they likely to be better prepared, if no efforts are made, if such disinclination is allowed to remain undisturbed? When, if things continue in such a state, may we hope to behold a scriptural union of all the followers of Christ? Do we wait for a more favourable opportunity for removing obstacles to union? We seriously deceive ourselves if we think we are permitted to do so. Every Christian community, as well as every individual Christian, is un-

der an imperative obligation *now* to do every thing in its power for producing unity in the church; and no community can allow any thing of schismatic character or tendency to remain in its constitution, or adhere to its administration, without incurring aggravated guilt. Why, then, do not the various sections of the Christian body reconsider their respective peculiarities, in order that they may lop off any among these which are not required by Divine authority, and which are offensive to their brethren? Is it that the various sects having so long and fiercely contended for their respective peculiarities, they would now be ashamed to give any of them up? Or, do the members of each denomination think that they alone are the conservators of Divine truth—that their church, and theirs alone, possesses a scriptural constitution, and pursues the scripturally prescribed course; and that all others deviate from the right way just as they recede from them? Or, are doubtful customs and forms dearer to the disciples of Christ than the unity of the members of his body? Or, shall the obstinacy of Christians induce an unbelieving world to affix to the New Testament such a libel as this, that it is written in such a manner as inevitably to produce those divisions it so emphatically condemns? Or, shall the revolting conclusion be forced upon us, that those who look forward, with humble hope, to an eternal union in heaven, cannot by any means be brought to unite and co-operate on earth? If Christians would prove to the world that they are actu-

ated by no such unworthy motives, and would avert such disastrous influences of their conduct, we would beseech them to prepare, without delay, for removing from the constitutions of their churches whatever is calculated to prolong the existence of schism.

And, happily, we need no lengthened consistorial deliberations in order to devise a Formula of Concord as a basis for an universal and enduring union of Christians;—that Formula has long since been devised by infallible wisdom, and promulgated by supreme authority;—and it is in substance this: That those who exhibit evidence that they have been received by Christ, by submitting to his authority, and manifesting his spirit, are to receive one another; and that, in reference to all things not indispensable to the maintenance of union with Christ, every one endeavouring to be fully persuaded in his own mind, is to be allowed full liberty to act agreeably to his convictions of duty, only that he be careful in all things to avoid giving offence to his brethren, like the great Apostle, endeavouring to "please all men in all things," and "giving no offence, neither to the Jews nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God." Nothing is required but the return of all Christians and of all Christian communities to the observance of these simple rules, in order to a universal and permanent union of those who love the Lord Jesus Christ. Only let the principle of love obtain that supremacy which of right belongs to it, and put forth its strength, and let it have scope to operate by those restrictions being re-

moved, which our misconceptions and mutual suspicions have imposed, and soon shall we see the face of Christian society transformed. Let a love like that wherewith Christ loved us be brought into play, and those who now stand aloof from each other in distrust and hostility, would rush into each other's arms with an exuberance of delight. And then, while rejoicingly pursuing their course together, they would wonder what could have kept them so long asunder; for, from the serene elevation now attained, they would look in vain for those impassible barriers that were wont to stand between them, these—far beneath —having disappeared among the mists which ever creep along the low swampy ground of sectarianism.

When such an elevating love shall take possession of the church, she will arise from the dust of her defilement and degradation, and mount up to that commanding height which she originally occupied, to direct and control the energies of man. Then shall she be severed from the world, and shall receive enlarged measures of the holy influences of "the Spirit from on high," and her various sections, laying aside sectarian distinctions and names, shall rally round the Bible as the one universal standard of their faith. Then, no longer existing in disjointed fragments, which can scarcely move without coming into collision, but, embracing the same faith, animated by the same spirit, and impelled by the same motives, she shall move on in majesty and strength, towards one universally acknowledged object, guided by one perfect rule.

In all the special duties which our situation demands, as well as in all other duties, we are to engage in fervent prayer for Divine direction and support. It becomes us to set ourselves with alacrity to the performance of whatever duties devolve upon us, but we are not required to do so in our own strength. The promise of Divine support is graciously vouchsafed—"As thy day is, so shall thy strength be." But aid from on high is not to be expected, unless it is implored. The Scriptures represent the bestowment of benefits, either on individuals or communities, as so connected with a desire for them on their part, as never to be presumed on unless such a desire be expressed. When God had promised to his ancient people a plenitude of blessings—restoration to Canaan, renovation of nature, and abundance of earthly good—he adds, "I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, that I may do it for them." And our Lord, in his inexpressibly affectionate and animating address to his disciples on the night before his death, among many other encouraging and delightful promises, thrice delivers this, "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you," preceded the last time by his solemn asseveration, "Verily, verily, I say unto you." "Hitherto," he adds, "ye have asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." Were the members of the Christian community heartily to set themselves to the performance of the special duties

at present devolving on them, imploring, with unceasing importunity, that God would vouchsafe his direction and blessing, resolving not to keep silence, and to " give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise upon the earth." Were Christians thus to combine the highest practicable efforts for restoring unity to the church, with fervent prayer to the source of wisdom and strength, we might well indulge the hope that God would communicate such enlarged measures of his grace and Spirit, as would soon elevate his people to a station of high distinction above all that are of the world, and beneath which insincere profession would be left at a confounding distance;—as would raise them to an eminence of spiritual attainment far above those mists and obscurations which now beset their vision, where the air is clear, and the prospect unbounded; where they would " see eye to eye," and be united together in one firm and rejoicing fraternity. Though we cannot be of one accord in other matters as yet, we may all be of one accord in this—in praying for the union of real Christians of every name. Let us earnestly and unceasingly implore this crowning blessing for the church from the Lord God of our fathers, and we shall have the satisfaction to know, that we are imploring a blessing which he is most anxious to bestow, if the church would but allow him to bestow it—if she would receive it at his hand, and that the powerful and prevailing intercession of Christ will be concurrent with ours, and that the Holy Spirit is ready—is waiting to fill the church

with vital energy, if she would but cast forth the hatred which she harbours in her bosom. Come, then, we beseech thee, O Lord our God, according to thy promise, and pour out thy Spirit on thy people in these last days, that, with an enlarged measure of Divine knowledge, and an enhanced fervour of sanctified love, the multitude of them that believe may be again as at the first, "of one heart and of one soul," "praising God, and having favour with all the people," and having added to their numbers "daily of such as shall be saved."

In the present condition of the church it would be greatly conducive to her unity, would the disciples of Christ attend more to the spirit manifested by those with whom they hold Christian communion, than to the opinions such entertain in regard to subordinate matters. In looking back on the history of the church, it is deeply painful for a mind at all enlightened, and actuated by the spirit of Christianity, to perceive, that while almost every doctrinal dogma —almost every punctilio in the various phases of church order and government, has been hoisted up to primary importance by being constituted a term of communion, that spirit which is a true criterion of connection with Christ—that spirit of which it is declared if any man be destitute, he is none of his, has been entirely disregarded. Though it is not a special, but a permanent duty of the church in all circumstances, it is a duty at present demanding special attention, that all who are entrusted with the examination of candidates for admission into Chris-

tian societies should be careful to ascertain that those whom they admit manifest the spirit of Christ. That living faith which entitles to admission into the fellowship of the saints "worketh by love;" and Christian churches are warranted to reject any one, who, while professing faith in Christ, manifests a temper of mind incompatible with love. If a person manifest a cherished hatred towards any of his brethren of mankind, and especially if he manifest such towards any who bear the image of Christ, whatever may be their weaknesses, or their peculiarities, he manifests an unrenewed heart; in despising the people of Christ, he in effect despiseth him. Christians are not to receive any such, any more than they are to receive the votaries of the world,—those who act on its principles, indulge in its pleasures, or shrink from their duty under its frowns or its derision. But when a person is the reverse of all this; when he evinces his love to God as well by compassion for sinners and love to all the brethren, as by a character purified from the pollutions of sin, and by superiority to the world in its maxims, its allurements, its frowns, and its derision, whatever may be his views in reference to matters of ritual or church polity, he gives indications of a living faith; he exhibits evidence of being accepted of God; the church is to receive him. And let a stranger, from whatever land, come to her gates, it concerns her not to enquire, ere she admit him into her bosom, what are his opinions in regard to the obscurer points of theology, or what views he entertains respecting church order and go-

vernment; but knows he the voice of Christ? follows he him at his call? is he actuated by his Spirit? seeks he the footsteps of the flock? And if such be his character, then is the church to welcome him with joy, "Come in, thou blessed of the Lord."

Another duty, to the observance of which all true Christians should consider themselves under special obligations at the present time, is carefully to avoid all harsh, uncharitable, and unmeasured statements and expressions regarding persons of other communions. Christians have full liberty to express their conscientious convictions and opinions, but the spirit of the religion they profess requires that they should do so with a tender regard for the feelings of their brethren who differ from them. The very least that is required of them in this case is the observance of the golden rule, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." Were Christians properly actuated by the spirit of this rule, whatever any one had felt to be offensive in the treatment he had received from his brethren, he would be careful to guard against in his treatment of them. It is required of all Christians with special urgency at the present time, that they carefully avoid attributing improper motives to their brethren. The only effectual restraint on this unchristian practice is love. Love is forward to put the most favourable construction on every thing done by its objects, to attribute the best motives to them that can be attributed, and is reluctant and

slow to condemn. Let us love "one another with pure hearts fervently"—let us be careful to fulfil this first of all Christian relative duties—and then, though we may differ on matters not essential to salvation, instead of indulging, as is now too often done, in mutual criminations, instead of representing opinions held by those who differ from us in the worst possible light, and attributing to them the most pernicious consequences, we would endeavour to remove misconceptions respecting the views entertained by our brethren of other communions, and would be forward to vindicate them from unjust aspersions and imputations.

It must ever be the duty of all Christian teachers who would not shun to declare the whole counsel of God—to inculcate brotherly love and mutual forbearance among Christians toward one another, and meekness and gentleness toward all men; but the circumstances of our times, and the spirit which at present prevails so much among professing Christians, demand that religious instructors should at present devote special attention to these duties, endeavouring to illustrate and enforce them with the most affectionate earnestness and fidelity. Let the ministers of Christ reflect on their great responsibility as instructors of the people, and ensamples to the flock—let them think of the fearful guilt they will incur either by neglecting to inculcate such duties as those of mutual forbearance and brotherly love, or, by displaying a temper of mind inimical to the spirit of the religion they teach. In every condition

of the church it must be of high importance that the ministers of Christ should carefully observe the injunctions of Paul to Timothy, that "the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle towards all men, apt to teach, in meekness instructing them that oppose themselves." But the circumstances of our times, and the spirit that is unhappily so prevalent, invest these injunctions with a character peculiarly momentous. The two great parties into which the Christians of Britain are at present divided, are placed in circumstances peculiarly adapted to foment an uncharitable spirit, and to engender strife and debate; and indeed these have been produced already to a fearful extent. Certainly, then, it highly concerns those who watch for souls to guard against these evils with peculiar care—both by precept and example endeavouring to prevent and remove them.

Another duty drawing a special importance from the present condition of the church, is the cultivation of brotherly intercourse between ministers of different communions. Occasional exchange of pulpit services between clergymen of different denominations, would conduce much to prepare the way for Christian union, would indeed be one important step towards it, and would, we are sure, be hailed with rejoicing by all enlightened private Christians. If the present constitution of the Established churches presents obstructions to an object so desirable, why are not all sincere Christians, as with one voice, pressing on the legislature the necessity of removing such obstructions? Is it not another proof of the schis-

matic temper of the times, that we hear so little complaint, on either hand, regarding such a grievous impediment to Christian union, as the exclusion of the ministers of the Established churches, and of the Dissenting body, from each other's pulpits, and that we see so little desire manifested for its removal? But why should there be so little exchange in pulpit ministrations between the ministers of different dissenting bodies in regard to whom no such restrictions exist? Why should ministers of one denomination be found in the pulpits of another, chiefly, or only on extraordinary occasions? Surely, all the difference subsisting between the forms of worship of the various orthodox dissenting communities cannot, among men of ordinary enlightenment, present any serious obstacles to occasional exchange in the ordinary services of the Lord's day. And, if disaffection does not still maintain a lingering existence among them, why should its appearance be allowed to remain? Why should the teachers of the people so generally conduct themselves towards each other as if it still existed, if it does not exist? Can the world be convinced that those who were wont to be at variance are reconciled, if they still continue to stand aloof from each other?

Let us now just glance at the motives which should induce Christians to attend to the special duties arising out of the present condition of the church.

1. We should attend to these duties from regard to the divine authority. If, when individuals or

communities have sinned, the course prescribed by God is humiliation, confession, humble prayer for forgiveness, and amendment, should there be hesitancy about pursuing it? The august and awful authority of Jehovah is surely a motive to action which admits neither of doubt nor delay. The church has neglected her duty, she has violated divine injunctions of the most solemn and momentous character. She has sinned in many ways, and among others, she has sinned deeply and fearfully in her schisms. It surely becomes her, as she regards the authority of her Head, to humble herself in the dust, to repent, to return to her first love, and to do her first works. God loved the church with a love that impelled him to deliver up his only-begotten and well-beloved Son. And Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it — gave himself even to death—and the Holy Spirit dwells in the church, as the teacher, comforter, and guide of all her members. God is her Saviour, her illuminator, her leader, and her king; should she not above all things be alive to his demands?

2. Christians should be impelled to the performance of the special duties now devolving on them by a regard for the honour of their Redeemer. In the present condition of the church and the world, Christ is defrauded of the glory due to him, he is subjected to reproach and put to open shame, and it must be so as long as his body, the church, continues torn, disfigured, and polluted—an object of derision and loathing to the world. O, then, Chris-

tians! as you value the glory of your Redeemer—a Redeemer who has done such great things for you, and whose name is so dear to your hearts, as you would desire above all things to see that name magnified through all the earth, as it grieves you at your hearts to hear it derided and blasphemed, follow the things which make for peace—the things which will tend to rescue that name from dishonour, and make it over all the earth "a name above every name"—a name at which "every knee shall bow."

3. Regard for the prosperity of the church should move Christians to attend to these duties. The prosperity of the church is an object of deep solicitude to her glorious Head. "O that my people had hearkened to my voice," cannot be less the aspiration of his heart respecting her, than it was respecting his people of old;—"and Israel had walked in my ways, I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand upon their adversaries. The haters of the Lord should have submitted themselves to him: but their time should have endured for ever. He should have fed them also with the finest of the wheat: with honey from the rock he should have satisfied thee." Christians, should not your feelings harmonize with those of your Lord? If he is so solicitous about the prosperity of the church, will not you, if actuated by his spirit, be solicitous about her prosperity too? But you cannot expect to see her prosper, so long as she continues rent into hostile factions. So long as she continues a kingdom divided against itself, how can

she prosper or prevail? Christians, if you would see the church—resplendent with the beauties of holiness—become "the light of the world," and "the joy of the whole earth," you must banish from your hearts disaffection towards one another. Surely there can be no antipathies among you, resulting from opinions or habits of thought and feeling stronger than those which subsisted between Jews and Gentiles at the introduction of Christianity,—between the literate and speculative Greek, looking down from the heights of a vain philosophy with supercilious contempt on the fanatical and unpolished Jew; and the Jew, on the other hand, inflated with the idea of being the privileged and exclusive favourite of heaven, frowning away from him the Greek as an outcast "sinner of the Gentiles;"—yet these antipathies the gospel came to annihilate. Christ on the cross slew the enmity between Jews and Gentiles, "that he might make of twain one new man, so making peace;" and in his kingdom "there is neither Jew nor Greek, circumcision nor uncircumcision, for they are all one in him." And will you, Christians of Britain, in this boasted age of enlightenment and pious zeal, continue to afflict his church, and hold her in the dust, by cherishing a spirit which he was lifted up on the cross to destroy?

4. Mutual love and sympathy should prompt Christians to pursue a course adapted to promote unity. Christians are journeying as pilgrims through a strange land,—"a land of deserts and of pits,"—

through a "great and terrible wilderness, wherein are fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought;" must it not be their interest to hold together? They are marching through a hostile world to their Father's house, why should they be parted asunder into many scattered groups, and thus exposed so much the more to the assaults of their foes?

5. We should be impelled to our duty by commiseration for the world. Christians should imitate their heavenly Master, who, in all his labours, and endurances, and prayers for the church, had ultimate reference to the conversion of the world. If "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life;" and, if Christ so loved it, that he gave himself, not only with the greatest readiness, but with sacrificial ardour for its salvation, ought not we to love it with a deeply commiserative love? Moved with pity for it in its deplorable condition as alienated from God, and consequently from the Source of all true enjoyment, ought not we to use all our influence, and put forth all our energies, in order that it may be brought back to Him? If the infinite, eternal, and self-sufficient Jehovah regarded us, his rebellious creatures, with such a love and such a pity, ought not we to pity those that are our brethren—"bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh?" Ought not the unspeakably important bearing which the union of Christians has on the conversion of the world, to

impel us to do every thing in our power to promote that union, and vigilantly to guard against whatever is inimical to it?

Disciples of Jesus of every communion, think of the responsibility which your character and functions involve. The hopes of the world rest upon you—of a world perishing in ignorance and sin. God has conferred on you unspeakable honour, by making you the medium through which his grace is to reach and save it. O, then, we beseech you, by the mercies of God, and by the ineffable yearnings of the bowels of his Son, let no differences in tastes or opinion alienate you in heart from one another. Take for your protection the triple shield of truth, purity, and love—a shield which no missiles of the enemy can pierce. Wield only the weapons that are spiritual, and they shall prove mighty through God in the work he assigns you. When you shall be united together, and separate from the unholy, then may we expect soon to see the glories of the millennium open on our world.

The duties of Christians towards the world at the present time, demand all the power and energy which the most consolidated and comprehensive union can command. While the urgency of the demands for agents and funds to occupy and cultivate the ever-increasing fields of missionary enterprise in heathen lands, require the most effective application of the whole energies of the church, the moral state of by far the larger number of the inhabitants of countries nominally Christian, calls loud-

ly for a loftier and purer development of Christian character than has been presented to the world by the members of the church since the days of the apostles. But the present schismatic condition of the church forbids such a development, in as much as it prevents the full expansion of one of the primary elements of Christian character—the principle of fraternal love. Yet the position of the church and the mental and moral state of the world require that this principle should be fully developed and come into plenary and energetic operation. The union of Christians is now demanded with an urgency which admits of no refusal, if they would advance and take possession of the world in the name of their King. Christians are elated with their victory over infidelity, scarcely reflecting that they have to combat a far more insidious and powerful foe—THE WORLD. This foe Christians can hope to conquer only by the weapons by which their Leader triumphed—the weapons of sacrificial love. By all other powers and influences it has been assailed but in vain. It still continues in the plenitude of strength and dominion. The church must open her heart for the reception of the Eternal Spirit—the Spirit of infinite love—in the fulness of his power, ere she can subdue the spirit of the world. Earth is the field on which the principles of love and hatred have yet to try their strength, and the church is the medium through which love is to operate—she is the vehicle which God has chosen to diffuse his love over all the earth, till it transform and fill every

heart of the whole family of man. Never did the condition of the world demand more loudly than it now does, that the church should be fit to discharge her momentous functions. The world is waiting for her laws. " The kingdom and the dominion under the whole heaven" seems ready to " be given to the saints of the Most High," if they were but found in a condition to take it. " The cities of the nations" are crumbling into dust—idolatry and false religion in all their forms are sinking into the torpor and helplessness of senility. The famishing nations are crowding around the church, eager to receive at her hands the bread of life; and shall she spend her strength in vain wranglings, while myriads are perishing, to whom she might furnish the knowledge of salvation, if she would but consecrate her undivided energies to the work?

Disciples of him who wept over Jerusalem, must not you be pierced in your hearts, when you look on a perishing world! Earth, under the dominion of Satan and sin, presents a spectacle sufficient to make " the very stones cry out;" and with such a spectacle before your eyes, can you remain unmoved? Will you not be roused to more energetic activity in the performance of your duties, and more ardent desires for Divine direction, and fuller dependence on Divine strength, with more fervent aspirations after the spirit of your Lord? That you may combine and increase your efforts, that you may increase and concentrate your light, should surely be prevailing motives with you to love one another. " Giv-

ing all diligence, add to your faith fortitude; and to fortitude, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, love of the brethren; and to love of the brethren, love to all men. For these things being in you, and abounding, will make you to be neither slothful nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Finally, let us all look upward to God with imploring confidence, and around on all our brethren with that love which "beareth all things, and rejoiceth in the truth," and inward on our own hearts with a severely scrutinizing eye; and soon we may see more cause for self-abasement, less for censure, and less for alarm. And while rising towards the heights of Christian perfection, in the refined atmosphere of sanctified love, our vision will quicken, our prospects extend, and earth, with all its objects become diminutive and dim; while the increasing brightness of the Uncreated Glory will attract us upward with a continually augmenting power.

SECTION IV.

PROSPECTS OF THE CHURCH.

An anticipation is now very generally entertained among Christians,—grounded partly on Scripture prophecy, and partly on the aspect of the times and the course of events, that we are about to enter the vestibule of the millennium,—that the church shall extend her conquests with little farther obstruction or reverse, till she embrace within her bosom the entire family of man. But whether this anticipation shall be realized or not, will depend partly on the conduct of the church herself. God in his wisdom has so arranged the administration of the economy of grace, that the designs of his mercy towards mankind are to a certain extent carried out into effect by the agency of men themselves. While it is a truth with which we ought ever to be deeply impressed, that we can by no services of ours merit any thing at the hand of God—that though we should do all that is required of us, it would still become us humbly to confess that we are " but unprofitable servants, having done nothing

but what it was our duty to do;" it is a truth not less momentous, and not less necessary to be kept in view, that we have a most important part to act in the economy of grace, in the first place for ourselves, and then for our fellows. Neglect of the part which respects ourselves, namely, attention to the mercy offered, and grateful reception and improvement of it —will in all ordinary cases, according to the established order of the spiritual economy, issue in our eternal perdition; and neglect of the part which we are appointed to act on behalf of our fellows, while it brings our own spiritual safety (to say the least) into fearful peril, deprives them of so much of the sanatory power of the gospel, as our agency might have brought to bear upon them. As has already been observed, the church has been constituted the vehicle by which God is to diffuse the knowledge of his love and mercy through all the earth—she has been invested with the momentous function of preaching the gospel to every creature; and the course of gloomy and dismal ages has shown us, that when she neglects her duty, there is none to supply her place; the world must remain in mental and moral darkness. But the church has now in some measure awoke to this part of her duty. The heralds of mercy sent forth by her are to be found in almost every land. The Scriptures are translated into almost every language. Science and art supplying unprecedented and ever-increasing power, are at her command, giving wings to her purposes of mercy. Few insurmountable obstructions are raised against

the progress of the truth by the powers of the world. God has crowned the labours of his servants in many instances with an encouraging measure of success. Tribes once sunk in the lowest mental and moral debasement, are now sustaining a fair Christian character, performing the duties proper to that character, and fast acquiring the comforts which Christianity brings with it. The " ends of the earth are remembering and turning to the Lord,"—and " the isles wait for his law." Are we not furnished with firm and increasing ground for the hope, that " the kingdoms of this world" will soon become " the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ?" Yes, these are encouraging features in the present character of the church, and the present state of the world, and ought to excite the liveliest gratitude to the Author of all good, and the Omnipotent Controller of all events. But we must bear in mind that the church is invested with other functions than that of preaching the gospel to every creature, functions to which we have had occasion more than once already to advert. The church is constituted " the salt of the earth," but if it be itself tending to putridity, in proportion as this is the case, its antiseptic power must be destroyed; and it will become a fearful auxiliary in the process of corruption. The church was erected to be " the light of the world"—was commanded to occupy the heights of moral purity, that she might catch the radiance of heaven, and reflect it on a world sitting " in the region and shadow of death." But in proportion as she descends from that eleva-

tion her lustre fades, and the shades of night again close over the nations. Farther, Christians were constituted one holy fraternity, to be bound together by a sacrificial love, that amid the isolating and destructive selfishness of the world, the church might stand forth, gloriously distinguished by beneficent efforts and endurances—a lasting and impressive monument of the divine character and mission of her Head—a proof so full and manifest of his being sent by the eternal Father, that it should command the belief of the world though all other proofs should fail. If, then, to the other favourable indications of the approaching triumph of Christianity, we could add that the church—we mean sincere Christians generally—stood distinct from the world, widely separated from it by purity of character, spirituality of enjoyment, and disinterested loftiness of aim. If we beheld the disciples of Christ firmly united together for the defence of the Holy Catholic Church, and the extension of the kingdom of their Lord—cherishing mutual sympathy as brethren exposed to the same perils, and subject to like infirmities, yet expecting and pressing forward to coincident glory; then, indeed, we might indulge an animating hope that the church would soon "break forth on the right hand and on the left," that "the Lord" would make "bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations," and that "all the ends of the earth" should soon see "the salvation of our God." But when we behold so many Christians so greatly conformed to the world, and wear-

ing so little of the lustre of heaven; when we see them rent into sects, opposing, hating, and vilifying one another, joining in doing so with the various factions of the enemies of God, and in many quarters showing little disposition to repentance and reformation. When we view these melancholy features in the character of the church, in connection with the tenor of unfulfilled prophecy, which seems to give premonition of appalling judgments yet to come, we cannot divest ourselves of the weighty apprehension that fearful sufferings and disastrous reverses may yet await the church; and we can see no reason she has to hope that she can escape these, unless she "remember" speedily "from whence she has fallen, and repent, and do her first works."

Unless when guided by inspired intimations not to be misconstrued, it becomes us to speak with much diffidence and caution regarding future events, and especially when these respect a matter of so much importance as the state of the church. As, moreover, both what we may call the chronology of unfulfilled symbolic prophecy, and the specific forms in which it shall be accomplished, are, from the very nature of the case, involved in obscurity, it is not our intention to institute any investigation respecting them—for that, we conceive, is not at all requisite for our present purpose—but merely to throw out a hint or two respecting the future destinies of the church as connected with her character and conduct, calculated to lead Christians to contemplate the subject under its darker as well as its

brighter aspect; if haply they might be yet more deeply impressed with the unspeakable importance of purity of character, mutual love, and combined energetic effort.

The prospects of the church, then, may be regarded as of three kinds, corresponding to the course she shall pursue, and the measures bearing on her, pursued by those entrusted with civil power.

1. If that bitter schismatic spirit, which has of late so fearfully infested the church, continue to rage and prevail, it must prove fatal to the higher principles of the spiritual life; for this, the word of God instructs us, is its direct tendency. And should the civil power continue to be so wielded as to restrain contending parties from physical collision, while allowing full freedom of speech and action to all, the church may, as she did during last century, sink into spiritual death, and vital religion become nearly or quite extinct in its most favoured homes. Her propagative institutions rent into pieces by sectarian jealousies and strifes, or robbed of their supplies by an increasing selfishness—the heralds of divine mercy in heathen lands abandoned to the precarious supplies they might derive from those among whom they were stationed, or recalled from their posts—the hopeful spots reclaimed from the wilderness allowed to run waste, or left to the inadequate efforts of a few disheartened labourers; the conversion of the world might be thrown back —who shall say how long? Thousands among us may be ready—at the announcement of the possi-

bility of such a course being taken by them, to exclaim with the anointed king of Syria, "Are we dogs that we should do such things?" But let us not be "high-minded, but fear"—we stand by faith—faith that "worketh by love," and our efforts to convert the heathen are labours of love. If, then, the principle of love in our hearts be extinguished, or supplanted by its opposite, who shall set limits to the fearful results? The church has already once and again declined from at least as great a height of spiritual attainment and zeal as that which she now occupies, and sunk into a depth of inertness and guilt as great as would be that which we have supposed, or greater. What security have we that such things as have occurred already will not occur again? Rather have we not reason to apprehend that like causes, if allowed to operate, will produce like effects?

2. If, while the schismatic spirit continues to prevail, which now so deeply infects the church, those possessed of civil power should become so inflamed with sectarian virulence as to resort to physical force, in order to suppress one party and give supremacy to another, or if power should pass into the hands of those who would be inclined to have recourse to such an expedient, the dismal scenes of past ages might be re-enacted in all their horror. Those who should refuse to submit to the ecclesiastical despotism which the possessors of power might establish, would be expatriated, immured in dungeons, put to the rack, and committed to the flames.—Or,

though the civil power were to remain neutral, should faction become so powerful as to weaken its arm, contending parties, breaking loose from its feeble restraints, might rush into collision, and involve communities in all the horrors of civil war, instigated and inflamed by the most fearful of all human passions,—religious hatred. It is vain to trust to what is termed the enlightened and liberal spirit of the age, as a safeguard against sectarian virulence—as a sedative of schismatic rancour;—such a spirit—a truly liberal spirit—is far more limited among us,—possesses far fewer hearts—than our vanity would lead us to think. And schismatic hatred, though it may vary in degrees of intensity, is unchangeable in nature, requiring only sufficient excitement, and the requisite power, wherever and at whatever period it may exist, to persecute its objects even to the death. Sectarian rancour is a monster which nothing but the power of divine love can quell; if that be not supreme in the heart, let us not trust to any liberalism, however specious its character. Let us not deceive ourselves by thinking that there would not now be found, as well as in former times, men ready to act the most fearful part in a war of religious extermination, if the course of events should waft them up to power, and furnish sufficient excitement to the rancour of their spirits. Moreover, if we transplant the schismatic spirit which unhappily abounds so much at home, into the fields of our missionary labour—if there, along with the good seed, we sow the darnel of discord, it may spring up and

choke the plants of righteousness which are now appearing in them; or, a schismatic spirit once infused, may lurk, or seem to slumber in some quarters, till the work of evangelization appear to have advanced far towards completion, and most part of the inhabitants have professed the Christian faith; then, re-inflamed as it might be in many ways, it might burst forth with fearful fury—producing the most appalling and disastrous effects—blighting or burning up, as it has done before, the fair and hopeful fields of "the planting of the Lord's right hand."

3. But let the church humble herself before the Lord—let all her members earnestly implore of him that he would fill them with his Spirit,—let them separate themselves from those who falsify their profession by whatever form of sin, not only in church communion and brotherly intercourse, but also and especially by purity of character, and spirituality of enjoyment,—let them all cultivate and maintain the spirit which distinguished their Master while on earth, and then they will be all actuated by the same spirit—by compassionate and beneficent love, and will unite and support one another in performing the work assigned them for the conversion of the world. Let the true disciples of Christ separate themselves from those that have "the mark of the beast,"—let them come out from the mystical Babylon, by withdrawing from communion and alliance with those who participate in her fornications, by professing connection with Christ while they con-

tinue to indulge in sin; and then ceasing to be "partakers in her sins," they may hope to escape "her plagues." Let Christians be found "with one mind, and with one mouth glorifying God,"—let them be "blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation,"—let them "shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life;" then whatever judgments and plagues God may inflict on his enemies, they shall be safe,—protected under the shadow of the wings of the Almighty—"no evil shall befal them, nor plague come nigh their dwelling." From their secure retreat—"from the secret place of the Most High"—they shall look out and "see the reward of the wicked." For long ages "it was given" to the beast "to make war with the saints, and to overcome them;" but then the Lamb shall overcome him, "those that are with him being called, and chosen, and faithful." Then shall be celebrated, by "the marriage supper"—"the marriage of the Lamb,"—"his wife" having "made herself ready."

When the church shall have been purified from the pollutions of the world, and when all her sections shall have been united in full fellowship of spirit with Christ, and with one another, by the bond of holy love, whensoever, and by whatsoever order of means these glorious things may be accomplished; and when "the fulness of the Gentiles" shall have been brought into the fold of Christ, and all Israel shall have been saved. When thus the crowning

evidence of the Divine mission of the Saviour shall have been fairly presented to the world, and the predictions respecting the glory of his kingdom shall want but the last leap to have reached their complete fulfilment, those who, in contempt of such proofs, continue unbelievers—and the symbolic predictions of the Apocalypse seem to intimate that there will be many such—those who shall then continue enemies to God in their minds, and by wicked works, will—there is reason to apprehend—be visited with a destruction so sudden as to admit neither of submission nor retreat; that the earth may be cleared for the undivided dominion of "the saints of the Most High." When he who is "called Faithful and True," and who, "in righteousness, doth judge and make war," shall issue forth from the opened heavens, on "a white horse," august and awful in aspect and array:—"His eyes as a flame of fire, and on his head many crowns, ... clothed with a vesture dipped in blood, ... a sharp sword," issuing "out of his mouth—on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS"—"the armies in heaven following him on white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean," resistance will be vain, escape impossible. Though "the beast, and the kings of the earth," may gather together "their armies," "to make war with him that sitteth on the horse," they shall not stand, they "shall come to their end, and none shall help them." The beast and the false prophet—those delegates of Satan—shall be seized and consigned to the "lake of fire;"

and Satan himself shall be dragged from the earth, over which he had so long usurped dominion, chained, and shut up in the "bottomless pit," for "a thousand years." Then—the enemies of God and of his people all subdued, and banished from the earth—the church shall enter on the era of her millennial glory and rest.

THE END.

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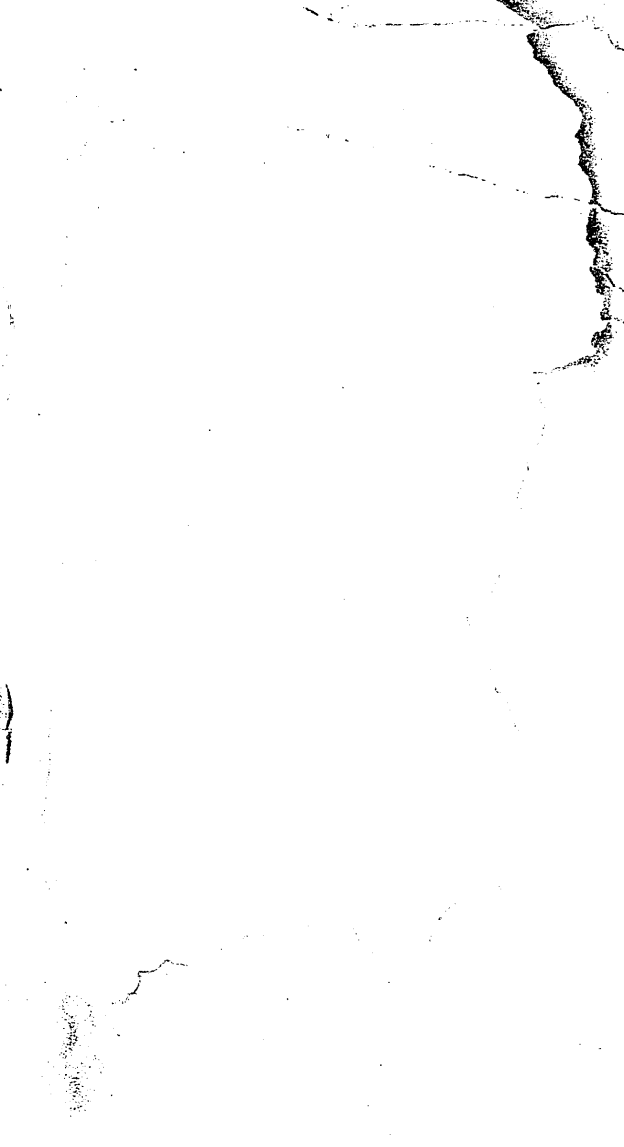

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